the 5 Sex Needs of Men and Women

DR. GARY & BARBARA ROSBERG
with Ginger Kolbaba

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ......................................................... vii
Chapter 1: It’s Not Just about Technique .......................... 1
Chapter 2: Redefining Sex ............................................. 15

PART 1
THE FIVE SEX NEEDS OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES
Chapter 3: What Spouses Need from Each Other .............. 33
Chapter 4: A Wife’s Top Three Sex Needs ....................... 45
Chapter 5: A Husband’s Top Three Sex Needs .................. 77
Chapter 6: A Wife’s Other Sex Needs ............................... 111
Chapter 7: A Husband’s Other Sex Needs ....................... 131

PART 2
ENRICHING YOUR SEX LIFE
Chapter 8: When Your Libidos Don’t Match ...................... 149
Chapter 9: When You Are Too Exhausted to Have Sex ......... 171
Chapter 10: The Elephant in the Bedroom: Talking about Sex .. 189
Chapter 11: Keeping the Fun and Excitement in Sex .......... 207
Chapter 12: God in the Bedroom .................................... 219
Chapter 13: Facing the Deeper Issues ............................. 241
  Intimacy Overrated: Premarital Sex ......................... 245
  Intimacy Stolen: Pornography ................................. 249
  Intimacy Violated: Infidelity .................................. 254
  Intimacy Damaged: Sexual Trauma ......................... 263
A Final Word ......................................................... 271

Appendix A: What Does the Bible Say about Marriage and Sex? .. 275
Appendix B: Resources for Finding Hope and Help ............... 279
Notes ........................................................................ 283
About the Rosbergs ...................................................... 289
Acknowledgments

“You are writing what?” We can’t tell you the number of times we heard that question when we mentioned we were writing a book titled *The Five Sex Needs of Men and Women*. We heard curious questions and saw some red faces. But most people said, “I can’t wait to get my copy.”

Why the strong responses to this book and title? We believe it’s because God created sex and has a great plan for your marriage in the area of sexual intimacy. But there is also another reason. We believe that many, if not most, Christian couples have been so overwhelmed with messages about sex that they are confused, concerned, and have truly legitimate questions about what a great sex life in a great Christian marriage looks like. The book you are holding has been labored over like all of the books we have written, but this one has a unique capacity to really give you, a husband and wife, a great deal of insight, coaching, and inspiration to have the best sex life you could ever imagine. And like all of our books, this one has been a team effort.

At the core of this team have been three women who have used their gifts, talents, and time to minister to us—as well as to you. The first person we want to acknowledge is Ginger Kolbaba. Ginger is the managing editor of *Marriage Partnership* magazine. She is well respected in the field of marriage literature, and when we identified early on that we wanted a strong collaborator in the writing, her name was at the top of the list. For several days, tucked away in a historic river city along the Mississippi, Ginger met with us and helped craft this message. She brought her skill, humor, and passion for marriage to every page. Thank you, Ginger. Truly, without you this book never would have been written.

Second, we commend Sarah Carroll for a job well done. Today Sarah is a stay-at-home mom with her new baby daughter, but for several years she worked alongside us as our radio researcher. We first met her when she was fourteen years old and submitted an essay for a radio contest on our program. She won the contest hands down. She then interned with us as a college student, eventually holding a vital role as our researcher for our daily radio program. Early on in the development of the manuscript for this book, she labored with us, crafting the early stages. At the end of the project she jumped back into the game and helped immeasurably by tracking down footnotes, sources, and more. Kudos to you, Sarah! Your talent is outmatched only by your passion for your marriage and for being a mom.
And third, we want to thank Lynn Vanderzalm, our editor. Lynn was one of the first people we met years ago at Tyndale House Publishers. And from the first meeting to the editing of our first Tyndale book, *The Five Love Needs of Men and Women*, and then on to eleven other book projects, she has been our champion, helping to forge out the best books we had in us. We heard Lynn referred to as the “velvet hammer” by another writer, and it describes her well. With love and grace she works with authors to keep digging down deep to bring the best message to readers. More important, she is a dear friend, and we honor her with this book.

We also thank our team at our ministry, America’s Family Coaches, as well as our board of directors, who equip us daily to do what we are passionate about doing: speaking and writing in different ways—from radio to books to conferences—so we can speak into the hearts of marriages in America and beyond. Everyone who comes into contact with our team and board comments that they are remarkable folks. And they are that—and more. We love you and thank you.

Thanks to our other friends at Tyndale: Ron Beers, Ken Petersen, Carol Traver, MaryLynn Layman, and more. You make us look far better than we are, and we thank you for your partnership but much more for your friendship. It is a great experience doing books the old-fashioned way, through a relationship. We promise to honor Jesus with this book.

And finally, we thank our kids and grandkids, who once again sacrificed time with Papa and Gaga Rosberg (that’s us) so that we could write a book. We promised you we wouldn’t embarrass you with this topic of sex, and we don’t believe we did. What a joy to be your mom and dad and grandparents. Our legacy is rich with passion for marriage and Jesus Christ. It doesn’t get any better than this, kids. Now guard your hearts, and go back to doing what you do best . . . loving Jesus, each other, and us!

*Gary and Barb Rosberg*
CHAPTER 1

It’s Not Just about Technique
When we were preparing to write this book, we took a weekend and drove six hours to a small tourist town where we would be free from distractions and interruptions. On our last day there, as we were walking to a restaurant for lunch, our daughter Sarah called us on our cell phone. She sounded panicked about what we were writing.

“Mom,” she said, “you’re not writing a technique book, are you?”

“Why? Would that be a problem?”

“Are you going to talk about your sex life?”

“Yes, Sarah, we’re telling everything about our sex life.” Barb laughed as she imagined the panic in our daughter’s eyes. “Absolutely, lots of detail. No holds barred. Will all your friends want a copy?”

As it turned out, Sarah’s phone call was prompted by a conversation she’d had with five of her friends—all of the women are married twentysomethings. “During our quilting time,” Sarah said, “we were doing our usual thing, talking and laughing,
when one of the women steered the conversation toward sex. She said, ‘I bought one of those technique books, because I want to please my husband—and experience some pleasure myself!’

“Well, everyone started shrieking and laughing, and then they all admitted that they had bought technique books too.

“Mom, you know I don’t usually talk about stuff like this, but I mentioned that you and Dad were writing a sex book. Everybody’s eyes got really big, and one of my friends gasped and said, ‘Your parents? Ewww! Will there be illustrations? They’re not going to talk about their own sex life, are they?’

“I said, ‘I certainly hope not,’ but then I realized I don’t know what you are going to write about.

“One of my other friends thought it was kind of cool. She said, ‘How many parents are willing to be that open about their sex lives?’ But then somebody else said, ‘Yes, but would you want to read the details of your parents’ doing it? I mean, the mental pictures alone would be enough to put me in therapy for years! It’s just . . . ewww.’

“So, Mom,” Sarah said nervously, “I really hope you and Dad aren’t going to embarrass me.”

As we ate our lunch, Barb recounted the conversation with Sarah. “I find it fascinating that these young women have all purchased books about sexual techniques. When we were first married, we never would have thought about buying that kind of book. But can you imagine if we had? I would have been so embarrassed. But now Sarah’s generation is not only buying sex technique books—they’re proud of it.”

“I think it’s great that Sarah and her friends want to make their sex lives as fulfilling as they possibly can,” Gary said.
“There are certainly some good books out there about sexual technique, but I’m a little concerned that by focusing on technique and the physical aspects of sex, they may miss out on the deeper, more fulfilling aspects of a great marriage relationship. Marriage is so much more than sex, and sex is so much more than physical pleasure and technique.”

Certainly there is a place for learning techniques—and practicing them—in our sex lives. When we get married, it’s not as if God opens our brains and pours in all the wisdom we will need for sexual satisfaction. But it doesn’t take long to realize that great sex involves more than just physical intercourse. A mutually satisfying sexual relationship—the kind that grows and matures and flourishes over the full life of a marriage—has more to do with bonding, emotional connection, mutual submission, and putting the other person’s interests above your own than it does with positions, pleasure points, and physical technique. Intercourse is a part but not the whole of sex.

Great sex involves more than just physical intercourse.

**The Mystery of Sex**

One of the reasons we decided to write this book is that sex has the potential to be the most profoundly satisfying and rich part of a marriage. Sex the way God intended it to be expressed—within the context of a loving, serving relationship between a
DR. GARY AND BARBARA ROSBERG

husband and wife—is a mysterious and sacred act that knits a
couple together in ways that are beyond description. We can
talk about the deep, toe-tingling pleasure of orgasm, but words
fail when we try to describe the oneness that a husband and wife
feel after giving their bodies to each other. The Bible tells us that
this oneness is a reflection, a mirror, of the oneness between
Christ and his body, the church: “A man leaves his father and
mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into
one.’ This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way
Christ and the church are one.”

Although sex can lead a couple into some of the most intense
pleasure in a marriage, sex also has the potential to lead them
into pain. Why is that true? First, the very mystery that we just
described can lead to misunderstanding between husbands and
wives. When we conducted a survey for our book The Five Love
Needs of Men and Women, we learned that intimacy was the
number two need expressed by both husbands and wives. How-
ever, we learned that men spell intimacy s-e-x and women spell
intimacy t-a-l-k. (We’ll discuss these differences in later chap-
ters.) Second, most of us come to our marriages with unrealistic
expectations about sex, expectations built on media images of
sculpted bodies and steamy seductions. We measure our own experiences against what we see on our television and movie screens or what we read about in books, and we feel disappointed. Maybe even cheated. Third, our sexual lives can cause hurt because we too often see sexual pleasure as something we get rather than something we give; we are more focused on our own needs than on our spouses’. A great sex life leaves no room for selfishness.

Deeply satisfying sex occurs when husbands and wives connect the physical with the spiritual, emotional, relational, and psychological sides of sex. When all these facets work together, couples enter the mystery of the oneness God intended.

God created men and women to be sexual beings. Yet very few topics are as confusing as the role of sex in a marriage. When we teach about sex at conferences, the atmosphere in the room changes. Some people can’t wait to hear us talk openly about a topic that’s often not discussed. Others are curious, almost as if they’re trying to figure out what is normal. Still others can’t believe we are going to talk about sex in a mixed audience; for them, the topic is taboo, something Christians do not discuss—certainly not in public and more than likely not in the privacy of their relationships either. Many couples experience guilt, shame,
or confusion. Some feel resigned to the idea that sex will never be what they expected or desired.

If we took seriously the glimpses that movies, television programs, and books give us into people’s bedrooms, we would conclude that singles or people in extramarital affairs have the best sex. Well, they don’t. Medical studies have discovered that married people have the best, most satisfying sex. They enjoy sex more often and have the highest levels of physical and emotional fulfillment. In fact, 88 percent of married people receive great physical pleasure from their sexual relationships, and 85 percent report the same positive experience emotionally.

The gold standard of research on sex in America is a 1994 national survey conducted by a team of University of Chicago researchers who interviewed 3,400 people. When the researchers asked respondents how sex makes them feel, married people outscored single people in every measure of delight. “Not only are married people the most emotionally fulfilled—telling researchers they feel loved, wanted, and taken care of while in each other’s arms—but they also report high levels of physical pleasure. Far from considering monogamy monotonous, 91 percent of husbands and wives say they aren’t just satisfied with their sex lives, they’re ‘thrilled.’”

Sex is extremely, intensely satisfying—when it’s used the way the Creator designed it. That’s when it works best, when it lasts longest, when it brings strength to a relationship, and when it elicits ecstatic responses from husbands and wives.

Would it surprise you to know that some of the most erotic writing about sex is in the Bible? The book called the Song of Songs records King Solomon’s conversation with his beloved,
and he spares no detail in describing his intimate love for her. God loves great sex. And if he’s placed his stamp of approval on it in the context of marriage, then that must mean it’s something worth doing—and pursuing.

Great sex isn’t just a grope, a grab, and a romp in the sack—although at times it can be. Great sex involves a lifetime of study and practice. It requires commitment and discipline.

Disappointment about Sex

Even with all of the statistics about how great married couples do in the bedroom, in Gary’s work as a counselor and in our work coaching people through our ministry America’s Family Coaches, hosting our national radio program, and speaking at national conferences, we’ve seen literally thousands of people who have problems with sexual intimacy. In many households, couples are confused and disillusioned about sex.

When we meet with people, we hear lots of disappointment and dissatisfaction. We keep asking ourselves why married Christians are struggling so much with sexual intimacy. Of all people in the world, they should have the best, most incredible sex lives. After all, they worship and serve the great creator and designer of sex! But it is clear to us that Christian couples are
struggling just as much as, if not more than, their non-Christian counterparts.

A few years ago we surveyed hundreds of couples from across the country to find out their top sex needs, their desires, and their struggles. The majority of this book is based on our findings in that survey.

There’s one thing we want to be clear about right up front. When we discuss sexual needs throughout this book, we do not necessarily define them the way many other authors of sex books do. Many books discuss specific techniques or other options relating to what takes place during intercourse. We define sexual needs as what goes on both inside and outside of the bedroom. What is or is not going on outside the bedroom has a profound impact on what goes on inside the bedroom.

What is or is not going on outside the bedroom has a profound impact on what goes on inside the bedroom.

In a sense, this book is a story of how you can make sure you and your spouse have the kind of sexual intimacy you’ve always longed for. And the good news is that it’s never too late.

If you are dealing with a sexual issue in your marriage—no matter what it is—we want you to find the hope, encouragement, and healing to pursue great sex. If you and your spouse are not experiencing a satisfying sex life, then we want to set you
free from what is holding you back, lead you to an open discussion, and ignite a desire to seek God’s best in your bedroom.

Our hope is that this book will be a winner’s manual for you. We want you and your spouse to have a winning relationship. If you’re going to run a race, you don’t want just to say you ran a race—you want the trophy!

Before you read any further, think about your sexual relationship. How would you rate yourself as a couple? Are you generally satisfied but want to kick it up a notch? Are you disappointed, left wanting a deeper sex life? Are you in serious trouble?

In chapters 3 through 7 we will discuss the top five sex needs expressed by the men and women we surveyed. But before we do that, write down your responses to these four questions:

1. What are your top five sex needs?
2. What would your spouse say are your top five sex needs?
3. What do you think are your spouse’s top five sex needs?
4. What would your spouse say are his or her top five sex needs?

Each of these questions is important. Not only is it important for you to understand your own needs—how can you communicate your needs if you don’t know what they are?—but you need to understand your spouse’s needs too. Not just what you think his or her needs are, but what they really are. Most of us live with a Golden-Rule mentality in our sex lives: If I treat my spouse the way I want to be treated, then we’ll be happy and have a fulfilling sex life. But as you have probably discovered and as we’ll discuss often in this book, men and women are different, and they have differing sex needs. Only
when we understand these unique needs—our own and our spouses’—will we be able to have deeply satisfying sexual relationships in our marriages.

Most of us live with a Golden-Rule mentality in our sex lives:

If I treat my spouse the way I want to be treated, then we’ll be happy and have a fulfilling sex life.

As you can see, this exercise will take some careful thought and some open communication. Some of you will be ready for that; others of you won’t. When you talk to each other, be respectful. Sex needs are not easy to discuss. Listen with the goal of understanding, not judging. Ask clarifying questions.

It’s all right if you are not completely aware of what your sex needs are. Reading this book will help you deepen your understanding. Your statement of your needs may change as you read the book and try various things. That’s okay too.

When you read the results of our survey, you may agree with the majority of the respondents—or not. The point isn’t whether or not you match up with the survey; the point is to help you grow in your awareness of your spouse’s needs and of how you can meet them. You or your spouse may have needs that don’t even appear in our list of top five needs. Does that mean you are weird? Probably not. Each of us is unique, a one-of-a-kind creation of a loving and wise God. Understanding your spouse’s
uniqueness and committing yourself to *meeting* those unique needs should be the goal of a satisfying sexual relationship.

*Understanding* your spouse's uniqueness and committing yourself to *meeting* those unique needs should be the goal of a satisfying sexual relationship.

So, if your needs are different from those listed in the survey results, do you need to read the book? We think you should, because the underlying principles apply to a variety of needs. Even if your needs are not quite the same, read through each of the chapters. We know you will learn things that will challenge you to make different choices, to ask probing questions, to take steps toward becoming sexually one with your spouse.

Each story we share is based on real couples’ experiences, although we’ve changed names and some aspects of their stories to protect their privacy. We hope their stories will assure you that you are not alone in the issues you and your spouse face.

Many times we may talk in generalities and break down issues by gender. We want to make clear, however, that although these differences are found in a majority of people, they are not by any means the defining experience. Sometimes these differences are reversed: Maybe, for instance, the man is more in tune with his emotions and the woman is more focused on the physical side of sex. If this is where you find yourself, please
know that that is okay. You and your spouse are not abnormal if you don’t necessarily fit within our research statistics.

Although we will highlight sex needs and issues, we don’t want to leave you without practical help on how to move toward deeper sexual intimacy. Each chapter includes lists and suggestions to get you started right away. Don’t allow the lists to overwhelm you. Pick a few actions that make sense for your situation, and concentrate on those. Even though we can give no absolute guarantees or quick fixes (anything worthwhile requires effort and attention), we do believe our suggestions will set you firmly on the path to a stronger and more fulfilling sex life.

Throughout this book we may say or suggest things that offend you. Rather than throw the book across the room, first stop and really think about what we’re saying. Ask God to shed light on those things that may cause you grief or anxiety or anger. Ask yourself why those statements bother you. Is it because there may be a kernel of truth that you haven’t been willing to face? We hope you will be open and willing to accept some things that may be difficult to take but that may bring a positive, lasting change to your sex life—and to your marriage.
APPENDIX A

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT MARRIAGE AND SEX?

The Bible speaks often about the marriage relationship and about sex.
Read through these Scripture passages, and allow them to guide you
and shape your marriage.

God's Intentions for Marriage

God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!
GENESIS 1:31

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will
make a helper who is just right for him.” GENESIS 2:18

“At last!” the man exclaimed. “This one is bone from my bone, and flesh
from my flesh! . . .” This explains why a man leaves his father and mother
and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Now the man
and his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame. GENESIS 2:23-25

New Testament Thoughts about Marriage

The husband should fulfill his wife’s sexual needs, and the wife should
fulfill her husband’s needs. 1 CORINTHIANS 7:3

Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to
refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves
more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so
that Satan won’t be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.
1 CORINTHIANS 7:5

Among the Lord’s people, women are not independent of men, and men
are not independent of women. For although the first woman came from
man, every other man was born from a woman, and everything comes
from God. 1 CORINTHIANS 11:11-12

A husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is
the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you
APPENDIX B

RESOURCES FOR FINDING HOPE AND HELP

For more information, check out these resources:

Books


NOTES

Chapter 1: It’s Not Just about Technique

1. Ephesians 5:31-32.

Chapter 2: Redefining Sex

1. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

Chapter 3: What Spouses Need from Each Other


Chapter 4: A Wife’s Top Three Sex Needs

2. Ibid., 96.
4. 1 Corinthians 13:5.
5. Gary Smalley and Norma Smalley, For Better or for Best (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 60.
7. Masterpeace Center for Counseling and Development, Online
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DR. GARY AND BARBARA ROSBERG are America’s Family Coaches—equipping and encouraging America’s families to live and finish life well. Married for more than thirty years, Gary and Barbara have a unique message for couples.

They have committed their ministry to a campaign to Divorce-Proof America’s Marriages . . . for the sake of the next generation. This campaign equips churches, small groups, and couples to build healthy, biblical marriages.

Together the Rosbergs have written more than a dozen resources, including The Great Marriage Q & A Book, Six Secrets to a Lasting Love, The Five Love Needs of Men and Women (2001 Gold Medallion finalist), Healing the Hurt in Your Marriage, Renewing Your Love: Devotions for Couples, Guard Your Heart (revised for couples), 40 Unforgettable Dates with Your Mate, Discover the Love of Your Life All Over Again DVD video series, Discover the Love of Your Life All Over Again workbook, Serving Love workbook, Guarding Love workbook, Connecting with Your Wife, and FamilyLife’s HomeBuilders Couples Series: Improving Communication in Your Marriage.

Gary and Barbara host a nationally syndicated weekday radio program, America’s Family Coaches . . . LIVE! On this live call-in program, heard in cities all across the country, they coach on many family-related issues. The Rosbergs also host a Saturday radio program that can be heard in the Midwest on the award-winning WHO 1040AM radio.

The Rosbergs have conducted conferences on family and relationship issues in more than one hundred cities across the country. Their flagship conference, Discover the Love of Your Life All Over Again, is having an impact on churches and communities nationwide. They have been on the national speaking team for FamilyLife’s Weekend to Remember conferences since 1988. Gary has also spoken to thousands of men at Promise Keepers stadium events annually since 1996 and to parents and adolescents at Focus on the Family’s Life on the Edge tour.
GARY, who earned his Ed.D. from Drake University, has been a marriage and family counselor for more than twenty-five years. He founded and coaches CrossTrain, a weekly Des Moines–area men’s ministry comprised of up to five hundred men. Gary serves as the president and member of the board of directors for America’s Family Coaches.

BARBARA earned her B.F.A. from Drake University and has authored Connecting with Your Wife and co-authored many other books with Gary. She is also a featured speaker for the Extraordinary Women video series produced by the American Association of Christian Counselors. Barb serves as executive vice president and member of the board of directors for America’s Family Coaches.

The Rosbergs live outside Des Moines, Iowa. They have two married daughters and three grandchildren.

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