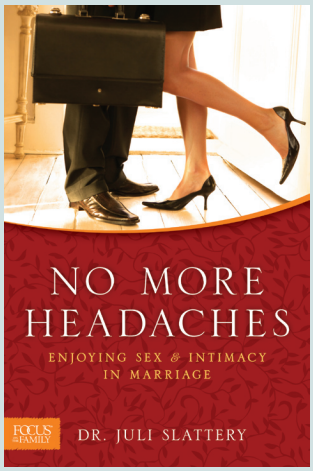
ISBN: 978-1-58997-538-5



No More Headaches

Both husbands and wives can be extremely frustrated by the differences in sexual needs and expectations between them. There are few safe and appropriate places to ask the questions about sex that frustrate and confuse women most. In *No More Headaches*, Juli Slattery provides that place with honest answers that target women's specific needs.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Sharing experiences and struggles with other women has a lot of benefits—we can vent, feel validated, and receive advice and encouragement. But sometimes discussions can also turn negative. While meaning well, we can quickly slide into slander, judgmental attitudes, gossip, and personal advice that does not square with biblical teaching. For this reason, as you discuss *No More Headaches*, I'd encourage you to keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Keep your discussions confidential. In the course of talking about sexual struggles, you may learn or share very personal information like past abortions, sexual indiscretions, or sexual struggles. Those revelations should be held in absolute confidence. Honor each other's stories. Committing to confidentiality will provide an atmosphere of trust and safety.
2. Do not share details about your sexual relationship that compromise your husband or that cause others to stumble. You can receive advice and encouragement from each other by sharing general struggles without getting into details. Do not share about your husband's past or present struggles without his consent. Violating his trust will ultimately put a wedge in your marriage.
3. Approach members of your group with grace and sensitivity. Perhaps a woman in your group will share something she has never before shared with anyone. Remember that although we call each other to holiness, we do so with humility and grace.
4. Don't forget to laugh. This is heavy stuff, but you can also have fun with it!

CHAPTER 1

1. Juli begins her book No More Headaches by talking about expectations and disappointments. Take a moment to take stock of where you are in your relationship. When you consider your marriage (especially your sex life), do you feel that your current situation has met or exceeded your expectations? Or do you feel that you've suffered more disappointments than you ever expected?
2. Juli listed three lies that people often believe about sex. Have you been deceived by any of these lies? If so, which ones? How has this affected your relationship?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

3. Juli wrote about marriage and the sexual relationship within marriage as a journey. What have you and your husband experienced on your journey? What part of the journey are you now on? How do you hope this book will help you on your journey?

CHAPTER 2

1. How do you feel about Juli's comment that "Great sex doesn't just happen"? Do you agree? Why or why not?

2. Consider Juli's idea that some Christian women feel that being sexual seems contradictory to being a godly woman. Have you ever felt this way? Why do you think some Christian women might, at times, think in this manner? How can we know that this perspective is unfounded?

3. Look back over the common barriers mentioned on pages 19-30. Which ones have affected your ability to work on your sex life? Whether from Juli's suggestions or another source, what can you do to begin working on your specific barriers?

CHAPTER 3

1. Chapter 3 covers the important but sometimes difficult topic of having fences in your sexual relationship. In other words, deciding what's okay, not okay, comfortable, not comfortable, right, wrong, and so on. Julie mentioned six basic fences. If you were to add one, what would it be? If you wanted to delete one from the list, what would it be and why?

2. Do you feel that you and your spouse have unwritten boundaries or "fences" that you've established?
   Apart from sex, what are some fences in your relationship with your spouse? (For example, do you have unwritten rules when it comes to spending time with the opposite sex [other than your spouse]? Or rules regarding what sort of entertainment you allow in your home? Boundaries that you don't cross when someone's angry, such as name-calling or bringing up past hurts?)

3. Juli talked about the fact that some people do not know how to enjoy sex without tasting "forbidden fruit" (or feeling as though they're doing something wrong). Why do you think a person might feel this way? Understanding that it wouldn't be easy, how could a person work toward changing this mind-set?

CHAPTER 4

1. What stage of marriage described by Juli fits your current situation? Is this stage of life what you expected it would be? Or did you feel blindsided by the change in your environment?

2. Depending on where you are now, is there a stage you can look back on and appreciate? If so, what aspect of that time period was meaningful?

3. Juli talked about women who say yes to everything—but sex! Have you been guilty of that in your relationship? Take a moment and think about something you should have said no to. If you feel comfortable, share this with the group. Is there anything in your life now that you need to say no to?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

4. Do you ever feel that your role as a mom overtakes your role as a wife and lover? Does this bother you? Why or why not?

5. How might your upbringing have affected your perspective on sex? If you have children, how do you hope they will view sex in the future? How can you make sure that they grow up with a healthy view of sex?

CHAPTER 5

1. When considering the usual stereotypes regarding men and women and sexual preferences, do you feel that you fit into those typical categories, or do you feel frustrated or annoyed by those stereotypes?

2. Every relationship is unique, even if you do feel like you relate to the stereotypes. Take a moment to think of at least one aspect of your relationship with your spouse that is distinctive to the two of you.

3. Review the list on pages 85-86. Were you surprised by any of these facts? If so, which ones?

4. Juli talked about "becoming a teacher" and "learning to really talk about sex." Do either of these ideas make you uncomfortable? If so, why do you think that is?

5. Think back over your relationship. Can you remember times when you and your spouse talked openly about sex? Are there subjects you'd like to talk about, but feel too afraid or embarrassed? If so, what underlying reasons might cause those feelings?

6. If talking about sex with your spouse is difficult, do you think using Juli's suggestions could help you both feel more comfortable and willing to discuss intimacy? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 6

1. Was there anything in this chapter about understanding men's need for intimacy that evoked feelings of frustration or anger in you? If so, what was it? Was there anything that surprised you or gave you a better understanding of your husband? If so, share that with the group.

2. In a typical counseling session, Juli asks both partners, "What would you like to see changed in your marriage during our time together?" If you were sitting before her and she asked you that question, how would you answer?

3. Read the reasons listed on pages 110 and 111. Do you relate to any of these examples?

4. Juli says that your husband's sex drive is God's gift to you. Do you agree with this? Why or why not? If you do, how can you treat your husband's sexuality as a gift? How can you treat your own sexuality as a gift?

5. Sex is a powerful tool in marriage. Are you using this tool to foster a deeper connection with your spouse, or as a way to get what you want? Think for a moment about your expectations regarding sex. Is your behavior helping to fulfill those expectations, or to derail them? What needs to change?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

CHAPTER 7

1. Consider Juli's comment that while couples can underestimate sex in their relationship, they can also overestimate its importance. Which category sounds closer to your situation?
2. How have cultural and family influences shaped your perspective of the importance or non-importance of sex?
3. For those who feel that they're in the 20 percent club (and even if you wouldn't consider yourself in the 20 percent club), having read the topics Juli mentioned in this chapter, can you identify why your marriage works the way it does?
4. Realistically, name two areas that need to change in you in order for your sex life to improve.

CHAPTER 8

1. Juli says that all women can find something to be insecure about, and every woman knows this is true! For a moment, go ahead and name two or three areas (physical or otherwise) that you wish you could change about yourself.
2. In your opinion, how important is your body image when it comes to sex? Explain your answer. Can you name influences that have helped shape your opinion on this?
3. According to Juli, what's the danger in having unrealistic expectations when it comes to body image?
4. As Juli mentioned, the culture and media often portray sex as something for young and beautiful people—they put the focus on the body. How can this mind-set affect people? How has it affected you? What needs to shift in this sort of thinking? What should we focus on?
5. Name at least one way in which you can work toward changing your self-image issues. This might be something as simple as choosing (along with your spouse) to acquire a gym membership or begin buying healthier foods. Or this might mean you make a conscious effort to shield yourself from society's influences—such as choosing not to buy magazines that support unrealistic image expectations for women. Or you might choose to go through a Bible study that concentrates on God's view of who we are in Him. Whatever you come up with, make sure your list includes realistic actions you can immediately begin implementing in your life.

CHAPTER 9

1. Juli mentioned three types of "sexual baggage" that a person might bring into a relationship. Have you or your spouse brought any of those types of baggage into your marriage? If so, how has this affected your relationship? If it hasn't been an issue, what aspect of your relationship has helped you let go of the baggage?
2. According to Juli, your life and your marriage tell a story, and your baggage is a part of that story. What does your story look like right now?
   What do you want to change about your story? What kind of ending are you hoping for?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

3. Juli talked about Bible characters with major issues in their life story (Rahab and King David). Why do you think God chose to include their baggage when telling their story? How has your past shaped who you are today? (This can be a positive answer, a negative answer, or both.)

4. Do you or your spouse have ongoing issues with sexual baggage in your relationship? If so, have you sought counseling? If not, set aside some time for the two of you to come up with a plan to tackle this problem. This might mean finding a counselor and setting up an appointment, or rereading this chapter together and talking openly about this area of your marriage.
   If group members have had success in this area of their marriage, they should share what worked for them.

CHAPTER 10

1. If someone asked your spouse, "How's your love life?" (and he/she felt comfortable answering honestly), what do you think his/her response would be?

2. Instead of asking yourself this same question, ask yourself, "How's your love life with God?" What, if anything, do you want to change about your love life with God?

3. Reread the lists of "headaches" on pages 199-200. The second list offers the "love response" to each headache. Which one stands out the most to you? Which one would make the most difference in your marriage and family?

4. Which chapter of this book left the strongest impression on you? Why?

5. Six months from now, if someone asks you, "How's your love life?" how do you hope to answer? What do you need to do today to move your relationship (especially your sex life) in that direction?

NOTES