



intimacy ignited

Discover the
Fun and Freedom of
God-Centered Sex

DR. JOSEPH + LINDA

DR. PETER + LORRAINE

DILLOW + PINTUS

Let's face it. Your bank account isn't going to grow by accident or good intentions. Neither is your sex life. Thank you, Dillows and Pintuses, for dragging our conversation out of the Dark Ages and into the light of our good Father's design. May we never go back.

JARED ANDERSON

worship leader, songwriter, and composer of "Great I Am"

MEGAN ANDERSON

It turns out that the antidote to a blah intimacy is one part service, one part vulnerability, and—believe it or not—three parts theology. Who knew? Do your marriage a favor and read this life-changing book. (Maybe twice.)

JESSIE MINASSIAN

author of *Crushed: Why Guys Don't Have to Make or Break You*

Married couples: Become married lovers! This book offers some of the most practical help and biblical insight I've read in a long time.

PAULA RINEHART

author of *Strong Women, Soft Hearts* and *Sex and the Soul of a Woman*

Intimacy Ignited follows through on its promise to ignite intimacy in marriage. With so many mixed messages about sex in our society, *Intimacy Ignited* removes the confusion through honest, candid, and biblically inspiring truths. Bravo, Peter, Lorraine, Jody, and Linda, for providing such powerful, practical, and insightful principles that are sure to ignite intimacy in marriage.

JULIE GORMAN

a John Maxwell certified coach, trainer, and speaker, and author of *What I Wish My Mother Had Told Me About Men*

Intimacy Ignited is a biblical, insightful, chockful-of-ideas kind of book. It's for couples who together—hand in hand—want to step carefully into the water and walk with love into the deep of sexual intimacy.

JACK AND CAROLE MAYHALL

authors of *Marriage Takes More Than Love*

We highly recommend *Intimacy Ignited* for couples who desire to be inspired, encouraged, and strengthened in their intimate lives. This book should answer any question you've ever had about your sex life.

PAUL STANLEY

international vice president, The Navigators

PHYLLIS STANLEY

author of *Celebrate the Seasons*

Wow! After reading this book just once, we can hardly wait to read it again. Filled with honesty, helpful ideas, and incredible insight into God's perspective on sex and passion, *Intimacy Ignited* is a book we'll recommend again and again.

TOBEN AND JOANNE HEIM

authors of *Happily Ever After*

Driven by Scripture, *Intimacy Ignited* obtains the remarkable achievement of being both profoundly holy and intensely erotic. Tasefully written yet unabashedly frank, this book presents sex by God's design. Read it and apply what you learn. It's one of the best gifts you can give your marriage.

GARY L. THOMAS

author of *Sacred Marriage* and *Not the End but the Road*

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INTRODUCTION

Sex at Its Best



Married couples are talking:

- “Best romance story ever written.”
- “Inspiring, erotic, *very* steamy.”
- “This guy is hot!”
- “I was shocked and thrilled that it was so explicit and erotic in talking about sex.”
- “This book gave me permission to be wild and crazy with my husband in bed.”

Would you believe these couples are talking about the Song of Solomon?

Wait a minute! you’re thinking. *Isn’t that in the Bible? And Solomon? Wasn’t he the guy who had hundreds of wives? Why should I listen to anything he has to say about sex or marriage?*

Good question. After all, Solomon accumulated seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines during his lifetime. He’s not exactly a role model when it comes to marriage! What godly insights could he offer married couples today?

WHY SHOULD I LISTEN TO SOLOMON?

First of all, we want to point out that Solomon inherited many of his wives and concubines from his father; others he acquired for political alliances.

Also, 1 Kings indicates that it wasn't until later in his life that Solomon accumulated all his wives, which were his downfall: "When Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God" (11:4).

Even so, Solomon seems to lack the proper credentials for giving anyone—let alone Christians—marital advice. Like you, the four of us aren't sure we trust Solomon. But we do trust God.

Solomon's résumé has one positive credential that overshadows all his weaknesses as a writer for a book about married love. God chose Solomon to write the Song. What other credential does he need?

The one whom God chose, he also equipped. In his youth, the likely time in which the Song was written, Solomon was completely devoted to the Lord (see 1 Kings 3:4-15; 8:14-66). As a young leader he cried out to God, "Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong" (1 Kings 3:9, NIV). God, moved by Solomon's heart, answered his prayer and gave him "wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore" (4:29, NIV). God said there never would again be anyone as wise and discerning as Solomon—past, present, or future (see 3:12).

The wisest man of all time wrote the Song of Solomon. Granted, he was not perfect. But our imperfection has never stopped the Almighty from delivering a perfect message, and although the human vessel was flawed, God's message was not. Just as we do not discount the wisdom of Proverbs because Solomon became foolish later in life, so we do not discount the rich, inspired teaching that permeates the Song.

Now that we've discussed Solomon's credentials, we'll tell you about ours.

WHY SHOULD I LISTEN TO YOU?

Jody and Linda have been married for fifty years, and the Song of Solomon has been their "sex manual." They have benefited from the wisdom in this book and have spent hundreds of hours studying it. Jody holds a doctorate in theology and has dissected the Song in Hebrew. In the 1970s, he wrote

a popular commentary on the Song of Solomon called *Solomon on Sex*. Linda first wrote about the Song in 1977 in *Creative Counterpart*, a book that encourages wives in their biblical role as helpers to their husbands. Recently Linda wrote *What's It Like to Be Married to Me?* and coauthored *Passion Pursuit* with Dr. Juli Slattery.

Peter and Lorraine also have been married a long time—thirty-four years. Peter has a doctorate in educational leadership and wrote his dissertation on spirituality and servant leadership. Lorraine is author of *Diapers, Pacifiers, and Other Holy Things* and *Jump Off the Hormone Swing*.

Linda and Lorraine have written two books together: *Intimate Issues*, which answers twenty-one questions Christian women ask about sex, and *Gift-Wrapped by God*, which gives single women a biblical perspective on sex. They have taught almost eighty Intimate Issues conferences around the world. All of their writing and teaching is based on the Song of Solomon.

Like Solomon, we are not perfect. Nor are our marriages perfect. Nevertheless, we believe God has asked us to write this book. Just as Solomon cried out to God, we also asked something of Him: We prayed that He would use us to encourage others by making His Word come alive so that they might receive instruction, hope, wisdom, and healing. We believe that the book you hold in your hands is God's answer to our prayers.

WHAT KIND OF BOOK IS THIS?

While many Christian marriage books provide great insight, most primarily reflect the authors' thoughts and then use God's Word to supplement their ideas. *Intimacy Ignited* is different. We wanted God's Word to drive this book. Nothing written in ages past, nor anything written in the ages to come, can compete with the "flawless" Word of God (Psalm 18:30, NIV). Only Scripture can claim to be "living and active . . . able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Only Scripture can boast that it is the very breath of the Almighty (see 2 Timothy 3:16). This is why we begin each chapter with God's Word and then follow it up with application for married couples. As we wrote we prayed that our thoughts would reflect His thoughts and that God

might graciously infuse the text with the power of His Spirit to instruct, teach, and build you up.

This book is not only unique in its starting point but also in its purpose. *Intimacy Ignited* is three books in one:

A popular commentary. The beginning of each chapter examines a portion of the Song and offers verse-by-verse commentary that will help you picture the cultural and historical context as well as understand the symbolism and meaning of the original Hebrew text.

A marriage manual. Each chapter also contains a section called “Applying the Song.” This section provides you with tried-and-true ways to put into practice the biblical principles discussed in the chapter. Some of these practical ideas come out of our own marriages; others come from people who have told us their stories. All of the quotes and stories in this book come from real people, although we often changed the identifying details in order to respect personal privacy. While we directed most of the application toward couples, on occasion Linda and Lorraine wrote specifically to women (“Applying the Song for Wives”) and other times Peter and Jody wrote application points that apply to men in particular (“Applying the Song for Husbands”).

A Bible study. At the end of the book is an eight-week Bible study designed to take you deeper into God’s Word. Couples may wish to do this privately or as part of a small group.

In order to help you better understand what you are about to read, we wanted to provide you with some background information that will enhance your appreciation of the Song.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

This book is for married couples and mature engaged couples who are close to their wedding day. If you are disappointed with your marriage, this book can help you. If your marriage is good, this book can help make it better. If your marriage is already “better,” this book can take it up another level.

But if abuse or addictive behavior characterizes your marriage, we encourage you to seek help beyond what is offered in these pages. Your

marriage doesn't have to be such a painful place. We urge you to get professional help from a counselor or pastor and pursue resources that will serve your specific need.

HELPFUL THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE SONG

Who Are the Main Characters?

The two main characters are King Solomon and his bride, the Shulammitte. *Shulammitte* is the Hebrew feminine noun for Solomon and can be translated as “Mrs. Solomon.” But because it felt too cumbersome to refer continually to the bride as Mrs. Solomon, we took the liberty to name her Tirzah. Tirzah was a city in Israel that was renowned for its beauty. In the Song, Solomon tells his bride, “You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling” (6:4).

An imaginary chorus of virgins called “the daughters of Jerusalem” acts as the third character in this drama. This chorus periodically interrupts the story to convey warnings or other messages of importance. Solomon used this chorus as a literary device to transition between scenes or emphasize certain points.

What Is the Song About?

The first part of the Song addresses the passions and insecurities faced by most newlyweds. We witness the king and his lovely virgin bride as they run to the bedroom to consummate their marriage. Heat rises from the pages as we view the steamy, yet appropriate, exchange of endearments and caresses. Then, toward the middle of the Song, problems surface. Selfishness rears its ugly head as Tirzah dreams about a recurring problem in their sexual relationship. In the dream, Solomon comes to Tirzah late at night, demanding sex. She rejects him because she wants to sleep, and then she feels bad and runs after him. They work through their problems and learn to become servant lovers to one another. The book ends with one of the most powerful statements in the Bible about married love, one lifted as a light of eternal hope for every couple: True love is stronger than death; it is eternal and everlasting, the very “flame of the LORD” (Song of Solomon 8:6).

What Are the Prevailing Views of the Song?

The two most common viewpoints are:

It's allegorical. Jews down through the ages see the Song as a “magnificent metaphor for the relationship between God and the Jewish people.”¹ They believe that Solomon represents God and the wife represents Israel. Christians who hold this view believe the Song is an allegory of Christ (Solomon) and the church (the bride).

It's literal. This view says that the Song is the actual love story between a husband and his wife and that the story teaches God's view of love, marriage, and sex.

In our desire to understand any book of the Bible, we must ask ourselves, *What is the most obvious message the author is trying to communicate?* While it is possible that the Song tells a story of spiritual love between God and His people, we have embraced the literal view of the Song throughout *Intimacy Ignited*.

Why Is the Song Difficult to Understand?

People often scratch their heads in bewilderment after an initial reading of the Song, asking, “What is going on here?” This reaction has to do, in part, with the manner in which the Song is written. For instance:

We don't understand how to read Hebrew poetry. Solomon wrote this book as poetry, not prose. Hebrew poetry is didactic and rhythmic, stressing and unstressing certain syllables and sounds. The Song also contains word parallelism, a technique in which similar (or opposite) ideas are offset between the lines of poetry. While these rhythmic phrases create an alluring tempo for the unfolding of a drama in Hebrew, all of the intended nuances make it difficult to accurately translate into the English language.

The scenes in the drama are not in chronological order. The poetic style used in the Song is called lyric idyl. One of the characteristics of this style is that the scenes are a series of flashbacks; they are not in order.² Be prepared to witness erotic sex scenes and *then* reminisce about the wedding!

Sexual references are explained through elusive imagery and symbolism. God inspired Solomon to use poetic imagery to portray explicit sexual acts. For example, when the husband entered his wife's “garden,” the image refers to

. . . well, let's save that for a detailed discussion in chapter 10. "Mandrakes" and "pomegranates," which spill forth their seed when opened, symbolize fertility and virility; "honey" and "wine" convey intense, erotic desire. Because all the sexual references are cloaked in symbolism, a child could pick up the Bible, read the verses, and find no offense. But a husband and wife could understand the terminology and find specific sexual instruction.

What Is the Theme of the Song?

"Put me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, jealousy is as severe as Sheol; its flashes are flashes of fire, *the very flame of the LORD*" (8:6, emphasis added).

This, the key verse of the Song, speaks of a love between a husband and wife that is white-hot, passionate, burning, and unable to be extinguished because it comes from God. The promise of the Song to married couples is that their love will last forever—if they become servant lovers. This book is dedicated to helping you and your spouse do just that.

A SONG AMONG SONGS

God ordained Solomon to write this timeless little instruction book on sex. The task before him must have seemed impossible. How would you feel if God told you, "Write a real-life drama that captures the passion, adventure, and mystery of marriage, but do not ignore the problems of daily life. Be frank and precise when speaking of sexual intimacy, but write in such a way that if a child reads the words, his or her innocence will remain intact. Regarding sexual activity, be specific enough to be helpful, but sensitive enough not to offend. Be spiritual, yet practical; wholesome, yet sensuous. And do it all in one hundred twenty verses or less"?

Quite a tall order, wouldn't you say? Yet Solomon did not balk.

The result is a book on sex that is specific, yet poetic; frank, yet innocent; simple, yet profound; confusing, yet straightforward. Truly, the Song is the best among all songs!

We are excited and expectant as we lead you into the riches of the Song of Solomon. We promise you that Solomon's best song will act as a match to ignite intimacy in your marriage.

SECTION ONE

Ignite the Flame





CHAPTER ONE

Where Did All the Passion Go?



*“I woke up one morning and discovered a stranger in my bed—my husband.”
“My dog is more affectionate and loving toward me than my wife is.”*

In speaking with thousands of couples across the country, we’ve heard many comments like the two you just read. Intimacy in America is in trouble. More specifically, intimacy in Christian marriages needs revival. Read on:

Eric slipped under the covers, filling the bedroom with the musky scent of Pleasure. The message was not lost on his wife. Inwardly, Katie groaned, Oh, no, not again—not tonight!

Eric slowly stroked Katie’s arm, hoping she’d respond to his unspoken plea: I wish you’d roll over and attack me as if I’m the most desirable man in the world.

Katie lay there, silent and unmoving, but her heart rebelled: How can you be so insensitive? Can’t you see how exhausted I am, what kind of day I’ve had, that my brain and body are dead?



Jennifer and Jeff sat on the couch, munching popcorn and watching The Family Man. During a playful scene in which Jack Campbell (Nicolas Cage) chases his wife around the bedroom in an attempt to seduce her, Jennifer sighed. Why doesn’t Jeff desire me sexually? Is

it because I don't look like the sexy blonde in this movie? What's wrong with me?

Jeff crunched down hard on his popcorn, angry. Why do movies always portray men as sex-crazed maniacs? I don't get it.

• • •

Candace pulled the covers over herself and turned onto her right side, a signal to Jared that she was going to sleep. She lay only six inches from him, but emotionally they were miles apart. For the thousandth time, he cursed his stupidity. The affair—if you could call it that—was over. One night of foolish indiscretion with a coworker had cost Jared fifteen years of trust with his wife.

They had been to counseling. He'd begged her to forgive him, and she said she had, but they hadn't made love in a month. Jared lay awake, staring into the night, trying to figure out how they had come to this. In the early years of marriage, their love had been a blazing bonfire, but even before the affair, it had cooled to a few dying embers. Now all that remained was a flickering spark. God help us! Will we ever feel close again, or are we destined to live forever like strangers?

Wait a minute! God never intended sex to be the cause of such heartache between a husband and wife. The Creator of the universe gave the gift of sex so that the two could become “one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31). How is it that the very thing God intended to unite married couples often tears them apart? How is it that something God created to bring pleasure causes so much pain? Why does sex in marriage often move from passion to boredom? Why are the sexual relationships of so many Christian couples in such a mess? How did we get here?

We'll answer the last question first, as we address the other questions throughout the book. It's a fair question, one that deserves an answer. How did we get in the mess we're in?

FROM PURITANISM TO PERVERSION

We doubt that the church fathers ever called a meeting and declared, “Let us make it our goal to distort biblical teaching on sex and thereby weaken

the mortar of this cornerstone in marriage.” Yet certain events formed a collective mind-set on the part of the church, a mind-set that viewed sex as an indulgence of fleshly pleasure that must be restrained.

Let’s go back in time, way back to the year AD 200, and see how the church viewed sex:

Church authorities issued edicts forbidding sex on Thursdays, the day of Christ’s arrest; on Fridays, the day of his death; on Saturdays, in honor of the Blessed Virgin; and on Sundays in honor of the departed saints. Wednesdays sometimes made the list too, as did the 40-day fast periods before Easter, Christmas, and Pentecost, and also feast days and days of the Apostles, as well as the days of female impurity. The list escalated until only 44 days a year remained available for marital sex!¹

Now leap forward a thousand years and look at the prevailing mind-set. We see a gentle shift from piety to propriety as England’s influence resulted in Victorian attitudes characterized by extreme modesty and utter silence on issues related to sexuality. A woman wasn’t even supposed to expose a naked ankle. Such behavior was considered brazen and shameful. This attitude so permeated Victorian society that people began covering the legs of furniture lest they arouse impure thoughts!²

We laugh at such absurdity—being “turned on” by table legs!—but truly it is not a laughing matter. The seeds of Victorianism were planted deeply into the minds of our church fathers and took root in the subsequent generations, as seen in this letter from the late 1800s, written by a pastor’s wife to a young woman about her upcoming wedding night:

To the sensitive young woman who has had the benefits of proper upbringing, the wedding day is, ironically, both the happiest and most terrifying day of her life. On the positive side, there is the wedding itself; on the negative side, there is the wedding night, during which the bride must “pay the piper,” so to speak, by facing for the first time the terrible experience of sex.

At this point, let me concede one shocking truth. Some young

women actually anticipate the wedding night ordeal with curiosity and pleasure! Beware such an attitude! One cardinal rule of marriage should never be forgotten: *Give little, give seldom, and above all, give grudgingly.* Otherwise what could have been a proper marriage could become an orgy of sexual lust.³

This soon-to-be-bride was not the only one to be given such unbiblical advice. In 1907, a popular book expressed these words of instruction to a groom about how to love his bride sexually:

Thousands of married men and women are suffering from the effects of excessive sexual indulgence. They drain their physical powers, weaken the intellect, and fail to attain the happiness and grand results which would otherwise be possible to them. It might be said that no man of average health, physical power and intellectual acumen can exceed the bounds of once a week without at least being in danger of having entered upon a life of excess both for himself and for his wife.

Marital moderation is most easily secured and maintained where married persons occupy separate beds. Sleeping in the same bed is the most ingenious of all possible devices to stimulate and inflame the carnal passion. Often the best arrangement is to occupy separate rooms because then you can escape the sexual excitement which comes daily by the twice-repeated exposure of undressing and dressing in each other's presence.⁴

For centuries, church leaders and laypeople have wrongly believed that sex is not to be enjoyed, but rather that it is a duty that husbands and wives must perform with restraint and propriety. We can see this attitude in the following quote from Lady Hillingdon, a British aristocrat:

I am happy now that Charles calls on my bedchamber less frequently than of old. As it is, I now endure but two calls a week, and when I hear his steps outside my door, I lie down on my bed, close my eyes, open my legs, and think of England.⁵

Even if we have never read about how the church and society viewed sex or have yet to meet a woman who “thinks about England” so that she can make it through the ordeal of sex with her husband, these distorted views have affected us. Attitudes and beliefs such as these have filtered down through the years, leaving a residue of negative thinking about sex in our generation. In the twentieth century they spawned a revolt: the sexual revolution.

In the 1960s, America thrust off the constraining bustier of Puritanism and bared her chest in defiance. Sexual freedom became the cry of the country. Freedom meant no rules, no restraints, and society gradually slipped into a pervasive attitude that proclaimed, “Do it—anywhere, anytime, with anyone.” This sexual “freedom” created its own kind of bondage; it resulted in unrestrained lust that sought sexual fulfillment but could not find it.

Today the sexual pendulum has swung from Puritanism to perversion. Flip on the computer and you can shop a wide assortment of pornography. Click on the television and see two *men* in bed together. Scan a current magazine and read about Washington’s latest sex scandal or about some movie star’s shock gimmick designed to promote personal fame. Sadly, our culture is so perverted that the shock factor is all but gone.

NOW WHAT?

While a look at the past can offer us insight into how we got to where we are today, it doesn’t help us solve sexual problems or transform distorted and harmful attitudes. What we really need to know is this: How do we get out of this mess? Simple. Look to the wisdom found in the Song of Solomon:

The Song has answers. “I can’t believe it! All this time, the answers to my marriage’s sexual frustrations have been right in front of me—in God’s Word. The Song of Solomon is beautiful and probably the most romantic thing ever written—a wonderful hidden secret!”

The Song is practical. “I learned new lovemaking techniques *in the Bible*—words to speak, ways to touch—that have put the sizzle back into our sex life.”

The Song is holy. “After reading the Song, I understood for the first time

how deeply God cares about our intimate relationship, that He wants to bless it and be a part of it.”

The Song is life-changing. “I will never be the same again. Never. What I learned in the Song of Solomon literally saved our marriage.”

The wisdom found in the Song can transform your marriage. We know this to be true because it has changed *our* marriages. As we’ve traveled around the country and taught these truths to thousands of men and women, we’ve seen transformation in their marriages as well. This book is about sex. Is sex the most important thing in marriage? No, but when the beauty, holiness, fun, and passion that God desires to be present in your intimate relationship are absent, it affects every other aspect of marriage.

Do you need to ignite intimacy in your marriage? The Song will show you how to make sex sing. It will show you sexual communication and creativity at its best. As you study the Song, you’ll find

Wisdom

Passion

Explicit sexual instruction

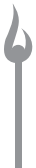
Romance

Honesty

Inspiration to ignite intimacy in your marriage

And you will learn how becoming a servant lover will enable you to nurture a love between you that is so hot, so passionate, and so intense that nothing will be able to extinguish it. So get ready for passion at its best. Before you turn the page, we ask you to open your heart and pray,

God, I don't want my marriage to be mediocre. I want passion and intimacy, not boredom and predictability. Speak to me as I read. May the power of Your Spirit and Your Word transform my heart and mind and help me to become the lover You desire me to be.



SERVANT LOVERS: Are teachable and desire to ignite intimacy.

SELFISH LOVERS: Have stubborn and unteachable hearts.



TIRZAH TO SOLOMON:

*“May he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!
For your love is better than wine.
Your oils have a pleasing fragrance,
Your name is like purified oil;
Therefore the maidens love you.
Draw me after you and let us run together!
The king has brought me into his chambers.”*

THE CHORUS:

*“We will rejoice in you and be glad;
We will extol your love more than wine.
Rightly do they love you.”*

SONG OF SOLOMON 1:2-4

