



I've Got Power



A Bible study on sex for women.
Now, that's different.

We've got news for you—God cares about sex. He created it. And He cares about your intimate relationship with your husband. He cares deeply about your heart and the wounds you may have been carrying around for many years.

Why study what He has to say about sex?

Because Jesus is the Healer.

He is your Redeemer.

He is the One who restores.

Your God is able to overcome any barrier.

We know that you have barriers in your marriage.

We have had them too and have learned to study God's truth and fall upon His grace in the midst of it all. So buckle up as we dive into *Passion Pursuit*.

When I Began to Pursue Passion

When I (Juli) had been married about ten years, I noticed that intimacy in my marriage had become, well, boring. In fact, I was so bored with the "same old" intimacy that I calculated in my mind approximately how many times my husband and I had probably done the same thing. I figured that, if we had sex on average twice a week, that was about 100 times a year or 1,000 times over ten years of marriage. Yeah, I know. Who thinks like that? The next thought I had was, *Something's gotta change. My bedroom ceiling just isn't that fascinating!*

That little mental exercise was a wake-up call for me. I wanted sexual intimacy in my marriage to be fun, new, and creative. If sex was dull after ten years, how would I feel after thirty years of marriage?



CHAPTER ONE

THEME:

You have power, the power to build a house of intimacy by God's design.

THEMEVERSE:

"The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down."
(Proverbs 14:1)

(Proverbs 14:1)

Regardless of where your marriage is, it's time for a wake-up call. Passion doesn't just happen—it must be pursued, sought after, and longed for. Unfortunately, most marriages get stuck when it comes to passion, romance, intimacy.

Pain simmered in Karin's eyes:

Sex is so overrated. What is the big deal anyway? Passion walked out our bedroom door with the first baby and has never returned. Making love has become, "You touch me here, I touch you there, you move inside me, and it's over before it's begun." And that is supposed to make me feel close to my husband? There are nights that I cry myself to sleep, drowning in isolation while he slumbers in a distant land right next to me.

Joy danced in Shannon's eyes:

Our intimate oneness grows deeper, better, more fun every year. Sex is where we escape from life and delight in the gift of each other. The intimacy we share, the exquisite pleasure we give, brings such joy. We can leave our hiding place of love refreshed—better prepared to face kids, problems, all of real life. How I thank God for His amazing gift of sexual passion.

We rejoice with Shannon but know that many wives identify with Karin. Perhaps the most depressing feeling a woman can have is absolute helplessness to change intimacy in her marriage. Karin's words express this—she feels defeated and powerless in her loneliness.

We want you to understand that you don't need to feel powerless! God has given you power to create intimacy in your marriage. In fact, we believe that every wife is actively using her power to either build or tear down intimacy. The key is that most women don't even know they have power, and they certainly don't understand how they might be using it to destroy the oneness they long for.

Although *Passion Pursuit* is about sexual intimacy in marriage, we recognize that sexual passion was never meant to occur in a vacuum. It is intimately intertwined with emotions, security, communication, and other vital aspects of your marriage. So we want to spend our first week with you looking at the "big picture" of intimacy in marriage.

The stereotype some women have of a "Christian wife" is one of weakness—a woman who lets her husband dominate the home. Through generations, the message has been passed down that God wants women to be weak, subservient, and helpless in marriage. Newsflash: this is *not* God's design for you as a wife.

Read the theme verse, Proverbs 14:1. Does this proverb sound like one that promotes weakness in women? On the other hand, does this proverb seem to be promoting a woman dominating her husband? We believe that a key element of building intimacy in your marriage is the question of how you use your power.



Get out your highlighter because what we are about to share needs to sink to the core of your being:

A woman can make two vital mistakes that may result in the destruction of her marriage: The first is to ignore or deny her power; the second is to abuse her power.¹

Whether through subtle or overt actions, a wife can shatter her husband's confidence and trust and sabotage his leadership ability through the misuse of her power in marriage. The philosopher Goethe expresses it well:

If you treat a man as he is, he will stay as he is. If you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become that bigger and better man.

We believe that within every man is a "bigger and better man." In some husbands, that hero may be emerging. In others, he may be hidden deep beneath layers of shame, anger, insecurity, or doubt. Your call as a wife is to use your abilities and influence to bring forth the bigger and better man within your husband. It is neither an easy task, nor one that will be quickly accomplished. In fact, it may take a lifetime. However, continually developing the bigger and better man in your husband is critical if you want to achieve deep intimacy and trust in your marriage.

A woman never marries the man of her dreams. She helps the man she married to become the man of his dreams.²



DAY 1

Your Power Zone: Respect

In building your marriage, your "power zones" directly correspond to your husband's need for respect, companionship, and sexual fulfillment. Over the next three days, we'll look at what God has to say about each of these.

Today, we want you to think specifically about your husband's need for respect and how that translates to a power zone for you. Your respect means so much to your husband because you know him in ways that no one else does.

You know his weaknesses and insecurities. You've seen him fail in the past. You know his faults but by respecting him, you choose to believe in him and to focus on what is worthy of respect.

♥ 1. Let's jump right into a very familiar and important passage on marriage: Ephesians 5:33. What do God's instructions to wives in this passage say about how to use power to promote intimacy?

Ephesians 5:33 says, "The wife must respect her husband." To help you understand the full meaning of the word *respect*, let's look at how *The Amplified Bible* renders this verse:

Let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband [that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, venerates, and esteems him; and that she defers to him, praises him, and loves and admires him exceedingly.]


You may think, "That's over the top! Surely it can't mean all that!" Oh but it does! Even now, ask God to broaden your understanding of all that respect means to your husband and how you can display respect in a way that is meaningful to him.

♥ 2. Choose three of the words from the expanded definition of respect above and describe what they mean and what you might do to demonstrate this attribute.




I confess, I've used my power of "respect" the wrong way by comparing Mike's leadership style to that of other men. My husband is a relationship-oriented man who would rather connect with someone than drive toward a goal. Early in our marriage, I subtly criticized him for this. I felt frustrated that he didn't have ambitious career goals like men I worked with in ministry. As much as I tried to disguise my complaints as "suggestions," they eroded Mike's feelings of competence in our marriage and hurt my husband deeply. My comments were born out of my own ungrateful heart. The Lord has taught me to see and appreciate the precious ways that Mike leads me and the boys, ways that are unique to him. He is a servant leader. One of his highest "goals" is to be with me and please me. Why in the world was I complaining about that?





 **3. How does God's teaching to wives about respect correlate to a man's deep need to feel adequate and capable? What do you think happens to a man when he does not feel respected by his wife?**

God calls us to be like Sarah, Abraham's wife. If you want to learn more about her, read Genesis 16–21. Sarah wasn't a silent or weak woman; she had opinions. However, she had a reverent attitude toward her husband—a husband who made some very BIG mistakes! In 1 Peter 3:6 we read: "You are her (Sarah's) daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."



 **4. Read 1 Peter 3:6 and then list three fears that keep you from meeting your husband's need for respect.**


 **5. Imagine that you have been invited to a bridal shower for a young friend. You've been asked to write a letter to this young bride about the *power of respect* in her upcoming marriage. Write your letter in the space below.**

 **6. Within the area of respect, you are either building or tearing down intimacy in your marriage. List several actions that reflect your marriage under each of the columns below:**

RESPECTFUL ACTIONS THAT BUILD

DISRESPECTFUL ACTIONS THAT TEAR DOWN

RESPECTFUL ACTIONS THAT BUILD	DISRESPECTFUL ACTIONS THAT TEAR DOWN
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 **7. What is one thing you will do in the next twenty-four hours to communicate respect to your husband?**





DAY 2

Your Power Zone: Companionship

Get ready to focus in on your husband's second great need—the need for companionship. Again, because companionship is a deep need in your husband, it becomes a power zone for you. God makes it very clear in Scripture that man needs a woman to be his companion. “God said, ‘It’s not good for the Man to be alone; I’ll make him a helper, a companion’” (Genesis 2:18 MSG).

Imagine that you completely understood your husband's deep need for respect, but you stopped right there. Your entire relationship with him was built around respect. You listened to

him and endorsed his every thought and decision. Is that the type of wife you want to be? The wife your husband desires? The wife God calls you to be?

While respect is vitally important, it is not your husband's only need. God created you to be your husband's friend and his trusted teammate.

The dictionary defines companionship as, “the state of being with someone.” One husband said it this way: “To a man, companionship is more than just being in the same room together. Companionship is about shared space—being side by side, shared purpose—common goals or interests, and shared commitment.”

So how does a woman who is convinced friendship comes through deep sharing create companionship with a husband whose view of companionship is very different? One writer said it like this:

HOW TO TREAT A WOMAN

- Wine her. Dine her. Call her. Hold her. Surprise her.
- Compliment her. Smile at her. Listen to her. Laugh with her.
- Cry with her. Romance her. Encourage her. Believe in her.
- Pray with her. Pray for her. Cuddle with her. Shop with her.
- Give her jewelry. Buy her flowers. Hold her hand.
- Write love letters to her. Go to the ends of the earth and back again for her.

HOW TO TREAT A MAN

Show up naked. Bring chicken wings. Don't block the TV.³



Are we suggesting you show up naked, bring food, and don't block the TV? No . . . but we are suggesting that you remember you have power in companionship. You were designed to be your husband's trusted teammate, completer, and friend. God says friendship is a deep need in your man.

Companionship is many things. Let us share two important aspects of deep friendship.

Companionship is sharing life with your husband.

Now, you might think, *I try to share life with my husband all the time, but he's not interested.* Here's the catch—sharing life doesn't just mean talking about life. Let's put it this way: **Men like to do life together while their wives like to process life together.** What does your husband like to do? Hike? Watch movies? Golf? Build? We are *not* suggesting that you have to go hunting with your husband—although you might choose to do that. But ask yourself this question, “What activities do my husband and I enjoy together?”

1. Read Genesis 2:18–20. Why do you think God asked Adam to name all the animals right before He created his companion?

2. What are a few ways your husband would like for you to “share life with him” and “be his friend”? (You might want to ask him!)

GETTING PERSONAL
WITH *Linda*



If a psychologist had given Jody and me personality and temperament tests before we married,

he might have said, “Stop and think before you say I do!” Jody and I are not just different, we are extremely different. Jody is a thinker, I'm a feeler. He is Mr. Flow With It. I love structure. I like relational movies (he would call them soppy). He likes science fiction movies, playing chess, studying theology, and astrophysics. One year for our anniversary, I treated him to an intellectual cruise where he studied the nature and origin of the universe. He loved the academic stimulation. I loved looking out at the glorious azure blue ocean and studying in depth about intimacy with my Abba Father. As different as our interests are, we always found joy in ministering together and parenting our kids. Our kids now have kids of their own. After almost fifty years of marriage, Jody and I are still different, but we encourage each other in our “differentness” and seek to find things we enjoy together. Taking hikes in the mountains, camping in the summer, and mentoring younger couples brings intimacy and joy.

