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Intended For Pleasure New Approaches To Sexual Intimacy In Christian Marriage By

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Rediscovering the Gift: New Approaches to Sexual Intimacy in Christian Marriage

For decades, many Christian couples have struggled to reconcile their faith with a vibrant, fulfilling sexual relationship. All too often, the church has framed physical intimacy as a duty or a concession to human weakness, leaving husbands and wives feeling disconnected, guilty, or simply unsatisfied. Yet, the Scriptures tell a very different story. From the poetic celebration of the Song of Solomon to the Apostle Paul's candid counsel in 1 Corinthians 7, the Bible affirms that marital intimacy is a profound gift, designed for bonding, comfort, and yes, deep pleasure. At the heart of this renewed understanding is the seminal work **Intended for Pleasure New Approaches to Sexual Intimacy in Christian Marriage By**Ed and Gaye Wheat. This book, and the movement it helped inspire, has reshaped how countless couples view their marriage bed, moving it from the periphery of Christian life to its rightful place as a sacred and joyful expression of covenant love.

This article explores the timeless principles and fresh perspectives that are helping Christian couples break free from outdated misconceptions. We will examine the biblical foundation for pleasure, delve into the core teachings of the Wheats' work, and offer practical, grace-filled strategies for building a sexually intimate marriage that honors God and deeply satisfies both spouses.

The Biblical Foundation: More Than a Duty

Before exploring new approaches, it is essential to ground ourselves in what the Bible actually says about sex within marriage. For too long, a narrow focus on procreation or the avoidance of sin has overshadowed the Creator's original intent. The biblical narrative presents a much richer picture.

The book of Genesis establishes the first marriage with a stunning declaration: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This "one flesh" union is holistic, encompassing emotional, spiritual, and physical dimensions. It is an exclusive, vulnerable, and deeply intimate bond. The very design of the human body, with its capacity for pleasure, witnesses to God's creative genius and his desire for us to experience joy within the safety of marriage.

The Song of Solomon is an entire biblical book dedicated to the erotic love between a husband and wife. Its poetry is unashamedly sensual, celebrating desire, admiration, and mutual delight. It offers a model of healthy, passionate love where both partners initiate and respond with freedom and affection. This book stands as a powerful corrective to any notion that physical pleasure is unspiritual. Instead, it demonstrates that God

celebrates the beauty and passion of marital intimacy.

Furthermore, the New Testament reinforces this positive view. In 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, Paul instructs spouses not to deprive one another, except by mutual agreement and for a limited time, for prayer. This passage frames sexual intimacy as a mutual right and responsibility, not a duty owed by one spouse to the other. It emphasizes equality and mutual care, highlighting that the marriage bed is a place of giving and receiving, of honoring and cherishing one another. This is the foundation upon which **Intended For Pleasure New Approaches To Sexual Intimacy In Christian Marriage By**Ed and Gaye Wheat builds its practical and compassionate guidance.

Understanding the Core of "Intended for Pleasure"

The book **Intended for Pleasure**by Ed and Gaye Wheat, first published in 1977, was revolutionary. It was one of the first Christian books to speak openly, practically, and positively about sex within marriage. The Wheats, drawing from Ed's background as a physician and their own marriage experience, offered a compassionate and informative resource that helped thousands of couples overcome sexual difficulties and discover the joy God intended.

At its heart, the book is built on several key principles:

- Sex is God's Idea: The Wheats firmly establish that God created sex and declared it "very good." Guilt and shame have no place in the marital bed when intimacy is expressed in love and commitment.
- Pleasure is a Purpose: While procreation is a beautiful outcome of marriage, it is not the only purpose, nor is it the primary one for every act of intimacy. Pleasure, bonding, comfort, and mutual delight are all God-given purposes for sexual expression.
- Communication is Crucial: Many sexual problems stem from a lack of open, honest communication. The Wheats provided practical exercises for couples to talk about their desires, fears, and needs, fostering understanding and reducing anxiety.
- Knowledge Dispels Fear: By providing clear, anatomical information and addressing common physical challenges (such as painful intercourse or erectile difficulties), the book empowers couples with knowledge, replacing uncertainty with confidence.
- A Lifelong Journey: Sexual intimacy is not a destination but a journey of discovery. It changes over the seasons of life and requires ongoing attention, grace, and a willingness to learn and adapt together.

The work of the Wheats opened the door for a broader conversation. Their legacy is a generation of Christian couples who feel more equipped and more free to enjoy God's gift of sexuality. The subtitle "New Approaches" captures the spirit of their work—a departure from silence and negativity toward a proactive, joyful, and biblically rooted pursuit of oneness.

Embracing New Approaches for Today's Couples

Building on the foundation laid by Ed and Gaye Wheat, today's Christian couples can embrace several new approaches to deepen their sexual intimacy. These strategies move beyond mere technique to address the heart, mind, and spirit of the relationship.

1. Cultivating Emotional Intimacy as the Gateway to Physical Oneness

For many couples, especially women, emotional closeness is essential for a satisfying sexual connection. This new approach recognizes that great sex begins long before the bedroom. It is fostered through daily acts of kindness, attentive listening, vulnerability, and shared experiences. When a couple feels emotionally safe and deeply known, physical intimacy becomes a natural extension of that closeness, rather than a disconnected event.

Practical steps include:

- Prioritizing unhurried, distraction-free conversations each day.
- Sharing your inner world—your dreams, fears, and joys—with your spouse.
- Praying together regularly, inviting God into the center of your relationship.
- Offering non-sexual touch and affection throughout the day to build connection.

2. Moving from Performance to Presence

A significant shift in modern Christian teaching on intimacy is the move away from a performance-oriented mindset. Many couples have felt pressure to achieve a certain frequency or to mirror what they see in secular media. This creates anxiety and detracts from genuine connection. A healthier approach focuses on being fully present with your spouse. It is about savoring the moment, enjoying touch, laughter, and mutual affection without an agenda. This presence-oriented intimacy reduces pressure and allows couples to discover a deeper, more authentic pleasure.

This aligns perfectly with the spirit of **Intended for Pleasure New Approaches to Sexual Intimacy in Christian Marriage By**Ed and Gaye Wheat, which always emphasized mutual care and understanding over rigid rules or expectations.

3. Redefining Pleasure as a Spiritual Act

Perhaps the most liberating new approach is the deliberate reframing of pleasure as a spiritual act of worship. When a husband and wife give themselves fully to one another in love, they are echoing the self-giving love of Christ for the church. The pleasure they experience is not separate from their faith; it is an expression of it. It is a celebration of the covenant, a renewal of their vows, and a tangible experience of God’s goodness.

This perspective transforms a couple’s attitude. Instead of seeing sex as a physical need they share, they see it as a holy gift they steward together. This mindset fosters gratitude, reduces shame, and invites God’s presence into their most intimate moments.

4. Proactive and Grace-Filled Communication About Desire

One of the most common struggles in marriage is navigating differing levels of desire. New approaches emphasize compassionate, non-demanding communication. Couples are encouraged to build a “desire vocabulary” and to explore the many factors that influence their interest in intimacy—stress, health, emotional connection, past experiences, and even hormonal cycles.

Instead of reacting with hurt or rejection when a spouse is not interested, couples can learn to respond with curiosity and care. They can explore what helps them feel more receptive and find creative ways to connect that honor both partners’ needs. The goal is not a perfect score of mutual desire every time, but a spirit of partnership and generosity.

Practical Steps for a Richer Marriage Bed

Applying these new approaches requires intentional action. Here are several practical steps couples can take:

1. Read and Discuss Together: Consider reading Intended For Pleasure New Approaches To Sexual Intimacy In Christian Marriage By Ed and Gaye Wheat as a couple. Use it as a starting point for honest conversations about your own relationship.
2. Schedule Uninterrupted Time: In our busy world, intimacy needs to be prioritized. Schedule regular date nights and times for connection without work, children, or phones.
3. Explore and Experiment with Grace: Approach your sexual relationship with a spirit of playful curiosity. Talk about what you might like to try, and be willing to give honest, loving feedback. Give each other permission to learn without judgment.

4. Address the Past: Past hurts, including shame from former teachings, past sexual experiences, or trauma, can deeply affect a marriage. Consider seeking professional Christian counseling if these issues create barriers in your relationship.

5. Pray Over Your Intimacy: Invite God into this area of your life. Pray together for a healthy, joyful, and unselfish sexual relationship. Ask him to heal any wounds and to deepen your bond.

6. Focus on a Holistic Connection: Remember that sexual intimacy is just one part of your marriage. Invest in your friendship, your shared spiritual life, your emotional connection, and your fun together. A healthy marriage in all areas naturally supports a thriving sexual relationship.

Overcoming Common Barriers with New Perspectives

Every couple faces challenges. The new approaches offer fresh ways to overcome them.

- For mismatched desire: Focus on increasing emotional intimacy and reducing pressure. Learn each other's "turn-ons" (emotional and relational, not just physical) and work together to create an environment where both partners feel safe and desired.

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