Bob: A lot of what marriage is about is putting the needs of someone else ahead of your own. Author and speaker Tim Downs says that’s true when we come together in marital intimacy as well.

Tim: The truth is, you can’t really serve someone until you know what their needs are, because if you don’t know their needs, you’ll assume their needs are the same as yours, and you’ll just end up serving yourself. And that is often the mistake we make when it comes to sex. We make the mistake of assuming our spouse’s needs are just the same as ours.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, June 20th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. We’re going to hear today from Tim and Joy Downs about what we can do as husbands and wives to have an other-centered approach to marital intimacy.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. This kind of takes me back a little bit. You know, a few months ago, when all of us had an opportunity to spend a few days together at sea – do you remember?

Dennis: On our cruise. We filled a boat with 2300 folks, and frankly, it was a hoot, Bob. One of the reasons it was so much fun was a message by Tim and Joy Downs called Things That Go Bump in the Night.

Bob: Here we were with about 1100 married couples. We were talking about marriage. Each evening we’d get together for a session. We’d be led in worship by a different artist and then have a different speaker speaking on a marriage topic. I think it was Wednesday night as we were at sea that Tim and Joy Downs talked about romance and intimacy and passion and sex.

Dennis: And did it in such a fun, entertaining, but sensitive way. It was masterful, and it was one of those messages you just wish all your friends could hear. So you know what? We’re making it available for our friends.

Bob: We’re going to let all our friends hear it, and before today’s program is over I’ll let you know about our plans for February of 2012 – the Love Like You Mean It cruise that
will take off the day before Valentine’s Day. I’ll give you all the details before we’re done here today.

**Dennis:** Tim and Joy Downs speak, Bob, at our *Weekend to Remember®* Marriage Getaways. They’ve been on the team for more than two decades, have three children, just a class act, and I think our listeners are really going to enjoy this.

**Bob:** Here are Tim and Joy Downs talking about marriage and intimacy and romance and trying to get all of that right as a married couple.

**Tim:** Well, if you remember your high school biology, you’ll recall that the human brain is composed of two hemispheres, right? There’s a left hemisphere and there’s a right hemisphere, and each has a different role. The left hemisphere handles all the logical, factual, orderly, step-by-step processes. If you’re an accountant or an engineer, we call you a left-brained person.

The right brain cares nothing about those things. It’s creative and temporal and spatial; the emotional center is in the right hemisphere of the brain. If you’re an artist, we call you a right-brained person.

Several years ago I read a study by a group of researchers who were trying to answer the question, *does a man’s and a woman’s brain actually work in different ways?* So to answer the question they wired electrodes to a woman’s brain. Now, men, these were professionals; don’t go trying this at home.

(laughter)

They wired electrodes to a woman’s brain to answer the question first of all, *when a woman feels, what part of her brain does she use to feel?* What should the answer be? It should be the right hemisphere of your brain.

So they needed to do something to elicit an emotional response. They sat the woman down in front of a TV, they had her watch, I don’t know, *The Bachelorette,* to get a feeling going here. They’re watching the meter, looking for electrical activity, expecting it to be just a blip in the right hemisphere.

But guess what? It wasn’t just in the right hemisphere. It was also in the left hemisphere, and the northern hemisphere and the southern hemisphere. That electrical activity was spread evenly throughout the woman’s brain.

Then they asked that woman to think about something abstract or complex, probably her husband,

(laughter)
expecting this time to find electrical activity in the left hemisphere of the brain. But guess what? It was also in the right hemisphere, and the north, and the south, and those researchers said, “That’s interesting. Women don’t seem to have specific parts of their brain reserved for specific tasks. Women seem to use their whole brain, all at the same time.”

In fact, some of those researchers even said, “You know that old idea of a woman’s intuition? That thing we’ve discarded as folklore for the last fifty years? Maybe it’s not folklore. Maybe it’s real. Maybe it’s a form of logic not available to men. Maybe it’s a form of logic you can only obtain when you can think while you feel and feel while you think.”

And men, you know what I’m talking about. You’ve had conversations with your wife where she went from A to Z and you have no idea how she got there, and you’re going, “Hang on a minute here, honey. Just let me get the other half of my brain fired up, alright?”

(laughter)

Because, you see, they’ve done the same studies with men. They’ve wired electrodes to our brains, they sat us down and had us watch The Bachelorette, and it just triggered a gag reflex.

(laughter)

We just feel around for the remote to change the channel.

And when they finally get us to feel something, guess what? It’s localized in the right hemisphere of the brain. And when they ask us to think about something, guess what? It’s localized in the left hemisphere of the brain, and those researchers said, “You know, women seem to be global thinkers, but men seem to be compartmentalized.”

Joy: Right. Well, women, we can think of it like this: We are like the radar array on the Starship Enterprise. We are really collecting data from far distant galaxies. We can pick up distant signals everywhere.

Now if you’re a mom, you know what I mean, because we have something called Mom-nipresence. We can be down in the basement doing laundry, we can be doing our business down there, and we know there’s something going on up on the third floor, don’t we?

Well, while we’re watching the kids, we are all there, aren’t we? But our husbands might not have that knack. Tim was home watching the kids. They were a lot younger back then. We had about a 4-year-old daughter and an 18-month-old little girl, and Tim was watching the kids. I was on a field trip with our oldest, Tommy, at the time. Well,
Erin even came up and told Tim while he was reading the newspaper, “Daddy, I think I’m going to cut Kelsey’s hair,” and Tim said, “Okay.”

(laughter)

Until 15 minutes later he realized, “What? What did she say? Cut somebody’s hair?” And so Kelsey, our youngest, had billowing clouds of curly brown hair. It was just beautiful, even at 18 months old. But not anymore.

(laughter)

Tim went running to find the girls and found that little Erin had gotten a pair of scissors, and Kelsey was just happily sitting in a pile of her own hair. She had hair cut to the scalp. I’m not kidding – to the scalp. She looked like a dog with mange.

She had been sheared like a sheep, except for one little patch of curl, right in the back, here, that I just had to let it grow. To this day our daughter Kelsey says, “Mom, why didn’t you just cut the whole thing, just give me a buzz, instead of leaving that curl?” I couldn’t part with it; I just couldn’t part with it.

Tim: You know, the book of Genesis tells us two amazing things in one sentence. It tells us that God made man in his own image, and male and female he created them. In other words, we are like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, and each of us has one part of the image of God. But when we come together in marriage and learn to live together in harmony and oneness, we complete the image and reflect what God is like.

Joy: Right.

Tim: We want to show you a challenging passage of Scripture that comes from 1 Corinthians chapter seven. I’m showing it to you from Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of the New Testament called The Message, because I really think it captures the essence of what the passage is about.

Listen to what it says: “The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality, the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to stand up for your rights. Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out.”

Now look at that last sentence again: “Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out.”

Now as Christian people it’s a familiar idea to us that marriage is a decision to serve one another, but what in the world does it mean to serve one another in bed? The truth is, you can’t really serve someone until you know what their needs are, because if you don’t know their needs, you’ll assume their needs are the same as yours, and you’ll just end up serving yourself.
And that is often the mistake we make when it comes to sex. We make the mistake of assuming our spouse’s needs are just the same as ours.

**Joy:** But they’re not. And the difficulty with that has been that part of the problem is our culture. Years ago it was expected that we would come to marriage as a novice in the area of sex.

**Tim:** Yes.

**Joy:** And now, because of the way our culture has gone, it has really told us erroneously that we should come to marriage as a sex expert. We should be experienced, we should know everything about sex, and that’s not God’s intention. In fact, God says in Proverbs 26, “Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

But that makes it hard to be a student, doesn’t it? If we’re supposed to know everything there is supposed to be out there about sex, it makes it hard to be humble. We think that we’re supposed to know everything, especially about our mate or how to please them, and so we’re a little bit sheepish about saying, “You know, even after 15 years of marriage, I’m not sure I understand you or how you work.”

**Tim:** So a good approach in this whole area of marriage is to be able to say to your spouse, “Teach me to make love with you.” I think that’s a good approach. We should think about the idea that when we marry, we begin a lifelong course of study. It’s called *How to Make Love to My Spouse.* Hey, you thought school was boring.

(laughter)

Nobody skips this class, and everybody looks forward to the homework.

(laughter)

But sometimes we get behind on our studies here, don’t we? Or sometimes we forget some lessons. Or maybe there are lessons that we’ve never learned. So what we’re doing with you tonight is really just a little bit of a refresher course. It’s a course in our different needs. You cannot serve your spouse in bed until you understand how their needs are different from your own.

So our little refresher course we just call *Serving in Bed 101.* Welcome to class. And we’re going to describe for you four fundamental differences between men and women, and you need to get these straight if you plan to serve.

So here’s difference number one: We have different attitudes toward sex. Ladies, I don’t think this will surprise you, but men often think of sex as a physical act. It’s that thing we do.
Joy and I have a policy in our marriage – we don’t make it up – we stole it from the book of Ephesians. You can find it there too. It goes like this: “Do not let the sun set on your anger.” Good advice, isn’t it? As one comedian said, “Never go to bed angry. Stay up and fight.”

(laughter)

And we do a pretty good job of applying this principal, I think, but there are certain nights where I am especially ornery. Do you have one of those? One of those moments of intense fellowship, and it’s late, and it’s time for bed, and we should bring it up but I’m not bringing it up because I’m supposed to bring it up. Have you ever been there? Don’t just stare at me like that.

(laughter)

So there we are. We’re in the bathroom, and I’m not bringing it up. We’re not talking to each other. And now God has designed bathrooms very small to force couples to apply biblical advice. So I need to brush my teeth, but the toothpaste is on the other side of my wife. So I decide that I’m not going to brush my teeth tonight.

(laughter)

I would rather let my teeth rot in my skull than ask that woman for anything. So we go out and we get in our queen-size bed. And when you’re having a moment of intense fellowship and you get into the queen-size bed, you know what you’re thinking, don’t you? “Should have bought the king-size bed. I could be twelve inches farther away from that woman right now.”

Because when you’re having a fight, you don’t cuddle like spoons in the middle of the mattress, do you? You skooch to the outer edges of the universe, and you pull the sheets tight around your neck, and you jerk ‘em back and forth a little. You start leaning out over the edge of the bed until you’re like those cliff climbers who sleep in their sleeping bags on the face of the cliff. And the sheet is so tight that if somebody took a scissors and just snipped it, you’d both fall out on the floor.

(laughter)

Now you do the worst thing of all, you turn off the lights. Oh-h-h. Because as long as the light was on, there was visual distraction. But you turn off the light, and it’s just you and the problem. And the problem is floating over the bed like a mosquito in your tent, and you can actually hear it, can’t you?

(mosquito noise)

But three minutes of silence will go by, and then from Joy’s side of the bed you’ll hear –
Joy: Can you just go to sleep?

Tim: And from my side of the bed you hear -- (snoring noise).

(laughter)

And women always want to know, how is that possible? Easy. If you look inside the male brain – now this is very technical, and I know it's late, so try to stay with me here – if you look inside the male brain, what you’ll find is a series of cardboard boxes. Any brain surgeon will tell you this is true.

Each box represents one of the activities or interests of life, and they’re marked accordingly. There’s one for work. There’s one for food. There’s one for sports. There’s one for this fight, and there’s one for sleep. So when I’m tired of the fight, I put that one on the shelf. I get out the one marked “sleep,” and I’m out of there.

(laughter)

There’s even one for sex. See, ladies, that’s why you can be having a conflict with your husband. Maybe you haven’t even talked for a couple of weeks, but maybe he wants to have time with you at the end of the evening, and you’re thinking, “Brain damage.”

(laughter)

“How is that possible?” Easy. Relationship. (pantomiming putting box on shelf and taking new one out) Sex.

(laughter)

Joy: Well, why can’t women think like that? Well, because women think of sex as a part of the overall relationship, don’t we? Now, if you would look inside the female brain you would see something entirely different. You don't see a lot of little boxes. You see one gigantic box, and it's called “Life.”

And this is what makes it difficult for us, because we can think of the past and the present and the future all at the same time. We can think about a lot of things at once. We're using our whole brain, like we said. So it's very difficult for us just to go into the bedroom and compartmentalize that little – “Okay, intimacy with my husband” – because we’re dragging that whole big box of life in there with us, aren’t we? It's very difficult.

It’s very hard, because we think of sex as a part of the relationship, if we felt like business partners all day long. It’s more been like, “Well, can you pick Billy up from soccer?” and “What time are we going to eat?” and “Don’t forget the PTA meeting,” and “Who’s going to pay that bill?” and “I have this trip that I’m planning,” and “Oh, yes, you
have to do the airline flights,” and we become more like business partners than romantic lovers.

And for a wife, that just puts a heap of water on the burning coals, because we feel like there’s no romance. The romance well has run dry. Well, why is that difficult? Those romantic feelings are really a direct link to how we feel about our man sexually. Sex is an extension of our conversation, not a replacement for it.

**Tim:** Yes.

**Joy:** When the warmth is lacking, we’re just not interested. You know, for men, sometimes -- Tim and I have had this discussion – It’s not that we’re deliberately trying to manipulate you or punish you for you not doing those things for us, by pursuing us or giving us the warmth that we need, but we just honestly really don’t feel that immediate attraction or warmth toward you without the overall relationship.

**Tim:** So what are the lessons we should learn about this difference? Well men, us first. We need to learn that we tend to count too much on sex to do our communication of love. We kind of like the Elvis method, you know, a little less conversation, honey. But the truth is, your wife would like to have some communication before she has sex.

Or maybe I should say it a different way. Your wife would like to see you communicate love in some other way than just sex. I had a woman come up to me at our Weekend to Remember Conference and say to me once, “The only time my husband ever says the words ‘I love you’ is during the act of making love.” The problem is, if that’s the only time he ever says “I love you,” is that love? Or is that just enthusiasm?

See, men, the problem is, after two weeks of marriage every woman learns that for a man, sex can be a deep, intimate, emotional experience, or it can be a purely mechanical act. So in this specific case, what is it? If you haven’t found a way to say, “I love you, I need you, and I desire you” before you come together physically, she doesn’t know what you mean.

**Joy:** So what can we learn as women? Well, we know that it’s hard for us to separate sex from the relationship. Things that prevent us from being warm with our husbands could be anger or unresolved conflict, bitterness, or a lack of connection.

And it’s kind of ironic that we want the relationship first and then we want to have intimacy, but our husbands often want that intimacy before they’ll want to connect on a more emotional and conversational level. So what can we as women do to help?

We can help this by not always waiting for the time to be perfect, for there to be the exact warmth and the emotional conditions there, for the timing to be perfect and all the kids to be in bed. So sometimes if we can really approach our husbands and respond to their initiation, sometimes that warmth and those feelings actually come. And then,
often taking this time produces a connection between the two of us that God has really intended to build that oneness.

**Bob:** Well, we’ve been listening to the first part of a message from Tim and Joy Downs about marital intimacy. You know, this is an issue where a lot of couples struggle in their marriage, and where do they go to get help on this? I mean, this is not the kind of thing that you feel like you can sit down with your friends or a pastor at your church and say, “Hey, can you help us out in this area?”

**Dennis:** Well, I’ve got a couple of thoughts for you. Number one, I wish I had heard this message as a newly-married man or maybe even as an engaged man – both Barbara and me. When you get married, you know you just assume it’s going to be real simple, and boy, it’s not simple.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** I mean you’re talking about two imperfect, selfish human beings. What I’d encourage our listeners to do is, if you know a young couple, tell them to go online and listen to this first half, and then tune in again as we listen to the second half of the message by Tim and Joy Downs, because, frankly, this is a biblical perspective of sex.

It’s God’s view of sex. And if there’s ever been a time in America’s history when we needed to cut through all the murky, muddy thinking about sex that the world promotes, it’s today. We need to hear what the Bible has to say about something that God designed.

**Bob:** You and Barbara wrote a book on this subject a number of years ago called *Rekindling the Romance*, and I thought you guys did a great job of helping both husbands and wives understand that we are different when it comes to this issue. And in understanding our differences, we can love and serve one another more effectively.

In fact, half of the book is for men; half of the book is for women, but as it turns out, the men tend to read the women’s half as well as their own, and the women tend to read what you’re saying to the guys as well as what Barbara is saying to them.

We’ve got copies of the book *Rekindling the Romance* in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. If our listeners are interested, I think it’s a very helpful book. You can order a copy from us when you go online at FamilyLifeToday.com, or you can call 1-800-FLTODAY to request a copy from us.

I have to tell you when I mentioned to our team that we were going to be airing the message today from Tim and Joy Downs, the message that they shared on the *Love Like You Mean It* cruise this year, the team said, “Well, can you tell people about the cruise that’s coming up next Valentine’s week, February 13-17, 2012?” And I said, “Well, yeah.”
They said, “Can you encourage folks to sign up, because already 60 percent of the boat is full. We’ve got 1300 people signed up, and we want to let FamilyLife Today listeners know.” I said, “Well, can we do anything special for FamilyLife Today listeners, if I’m going to tell them about it?”

They said, “How about this? If they go online at FamilyLifeToday.com and they click on the link there to the Love Like You Mean It cruise, and they let us know that they’re a FamilyLife Today listener, “– Here’s how you do that: you just type the word ‘UPGRADE’ in the promo code box that you find when you click on the Love Like You Mean It cruise information. “If you do that between now and Friday, you will get an ocean view cabin for the price of an interior cabin.”

So I said, “That sounds like a pretty good deal. I’ll pass that along.” So if you’d like to join us next year for the Love Like You Mean It cruise, February 13th through the 17th, all the information is available online at FamilyLifeToday.com. And when you click on the link, be sure to type the word “UPGRADE” in the promo code box, and they’ll upgrade your cabin from an interior stateroom to an ocean view stateroom. Not a bad deal.

And we hope you can come along. As we mentioned, Tim and Joy Downs are going to be there, Dennis and Barbara Rainey are going to be there, I’m going to be there with my wife, Mary Ann, Voddie Baucham will be there, Gary Thomas is going to be there, a lot of musicians are going to be joining us as well. It’s going to be a great week. The Love Like You Mean It Cruise next year, Valentine’s week, 2012.

Now tomorrow we are going to hear part two of Tim and Joy Downs’ message on intimacy and differences in marriage. I hope you can be back with us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

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