Bob: We clearly live in a culture that's confused when it comes to God's design for human sexuality. Dr. Juli Slattery says, “That's not just in the culture—that's in the church as well.”

Juli: Sometimes, I'll have young Christians ask me this question: “Why would God care if we have sex outside of marriage? Can you show me a verse in the Bible that says that you're not supposed to live with somebody before you get married?—or have sex before you get married?” And maybe they want to argue with you about the Greek words and what they really mean.

What I'd rather do, than showing them a verse that says what's wrong, is bring them to verses that give God's vision for the purpose of sexuality.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, June 17th. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I'm Bob Lepine. How do we talk about sexuality in a way that gives glory to God and puts the brilliance of His design on display? We'll hear about that today from Juli Slattery. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Monday edition. So, we're going to talk about something today that a lot of people are going to be—I guess there are some folks, who are uncomfortable with this subject being talked about. You guys know this because, when we talk about intimacy and sexuality at the Weekend to Remember® marriage getaway, there are couples who are just uncomfortable with the subject; right?

Ann: And the session can feel awkward to some people.

Dave: Yes; we call them the “blushers” in the room.

Bob: That's right.

Dave: There's just a little blushing going on when this topic comes up.

Bob: But here's the thing we've learned over the years is—people are hungry to hear a biblical perspective on marital intimacy and sex, because [whispering] it's not talked
about very much. I understand that this is radio; and folks are driving along and they’re thinking, “Do I want my kids to hear this?” So, if your kids are here, you may want to listen to this later; and now, the kids are going: “No, no! Leave it on.” [Laughter]

**Dave:** Exactly!

**Bob:** We think it's important, as we talk about marriage and family from time to time, to talk about one of the most important aspects of the marital relationship. This is a profound part of what God built when He created marriage.

**Dave:** I think it's extremely important to talk about it, because the culture’s talking about it. There isn't a place you can go that people aren't talking about this; yet, the church is quiet. We need to say, “What is God's design?” Because, guess what?—do you know this?—God invented it. [Laughter] God invented sex.

**Bob:** It was His idea; wasn’t it? Yes.

**Ann:** And the other thing that we have found, in speaking about marriage for the last 30 years—there’s a lot of confusion. There are many, many hurts; and it really is a topic that's difficult to talk about.

**Bob:** If you're listening to what the culture's saying, and you're taking your cues on marital sexuality from the culture, you're not going to wind up in a good place. If you're looking at what God's design is and what the Bible says about it, then you'll wind up in a better place.

What we're going to do today—we're going to hear Part One of a message from Dr. Juli Slattery, who has written and spoken on this subject a lot.

**Ann:** She's amazing!

**Bob:** She really is.

**Ann:** I'm really excited for listeners to hear her.

**Bob:** Yes; you guys weren't on the cruise this year.

**Ann:** No.

**Dave:** No.

**Bob:** Juli was on the cruise and spoke on the cruise—did a great job. The audience responded very favorably to, not only to her main session, but she did a break-out session that was filled to overflowing with people, who are saying: “We need to think, biblically, about this. We need biblical help on this.”
I should just mention, here—the 2020 FamilyLife® *Love Like You Mean It*® marriage cruise is probably going to sell out this month. We are in “Countdown to Sellout” mode—90 percent of the cruise cabins have been booked for 2020. If you are interested in being with us on the cruise, Valentine's week next year,—

**Dave:** Can't wait.

**Ann:** I'm excited.

**Bob:** —we need to hear from you this month; because we expect, as I said, to be completely sold out by the time June is over. To offer a little “Countdown to Sellout” incentive, our team has agreed that, if you will sign up this week, you can save $300 per couple on the cost of your cabin; and there are additional perks that they are adding to that. You can get all the information when you go to FamilyLifeToday.com or when you call 1-800-FL-TODAY. Again, for more information about the 2020 *Love Like You Mean It* marriage cruise, go to FamilyLifeToday.com; or call us at 1-800-358-6329—that's 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

Okay; we're going to hear Part One of a message from Dr. Juli Slattery. She titled this message—she’ll explain it, right here, in the beginning—she title this: “Things I Never Learned about Sex at Church.”

[Recorded Message]

**Juli:** We have grown up with a tradition, most of us, that we don't talk about sex very openly and honestly in church. Maybe we have a sermon every few years about the Song of Solomon. But we don't deal with the kind of issues that—like we don't know how to deal with them from a church perspective/from a godly perspective. I'm thankful for FamilyLife being a ministry that is courageous enough to begin dealing with these issues and even to have me here to open up some of this can of worms and talk about some of the things related to sex and sexuality that's difficult.

You might notice that on your seats, there is a seatbelt—you might want to put it on—[Laughter]—no; just kidding. Talking about sexuality and sexual issues is really difficult. I remember the first time that I spoke, publicly, on the issue of sexuality. I was invited to a woman's conference. They knew I spoke on marriage, so they asked me to talk about sex. I was in this conference room with about 300 or 400 women. They're ready to hear me talk about sex and marriage.

I was so nervous; and to make it worse, all the women were completely silent while I was teaching. Their eyes were boring into me; and some of them had their arms crossed—like this—it made it worse! I remember praying to the Lord in that moment, “God, if You get me through these next 45 minutes, I'll never speak on this again; because I heard You wrong.” [Laughter]
What happened after I was done speaking really surprised me. The women began forming a very long line—finally, they had a safe space to ask questions and talk about things that they’d been struggling with. Women shared about past sexual abuse. They talked about hating sex in their marriage, or their husbands not being interested in sex. They talked about their struggles with pornography or their struggles to forgive a husband who cheated on them—on, and on, and on. As I listened to women, and as I prayed with them that day, my prayer life changed. Instead of saying, “God, I must have heard you wrong,” I started to say, “God, there is so much pain in this room,”—I had no idea!

My job is now to, everyday, write and teach and address sexual issues in marriage and, also, in our culture. I go to churches all around the United States. Here’s what I want to tell you—everyplace I go, there is that much pain. There are those many questions; there are issues that represent a lot of confusion. And people don’t know where to go; they don’t know where a safe place is. This should be a safe place; we want this to be a safe place for us to ask our questions and seek healing.

The real issue around sexuality—we can talk about all the problems we face—but the biggest issue is that we really don’t understand the purpose of sex—like: “Why did God create sex and sexuality?” We really don’t know how to answer that question at a deep level.

When our kids were young—my husband Mike and I have three boys—and when they were little, sometimes, Mike would give me a break in the evening; and he would put the boys to bed. Sometimes, he would do something in terms of discipling them—like teaching them the Lord’s Prayer or going through the Ten Commandments.

One particular night, he was putting two of our boys—Michael, around the age of six, and Andrew, about four—he was putting them to bed. He was teaching them the Ten Commandments and they were memorizing the Ten Commandments. One of the boys stopped Mike and said in the middle of it, “Hey, Dad, what is adultery?” Mike had to think real quick on his feet—like: “How do you explain adultery to a four- and six-year-old?” He said, “Well, adultery is when God puts you in one family, but you don’t like that family anymore and you want to go to another family.” The boys were satisfied with that answer, which was good, because Mike didn’t have to go into further detail.

The next day, I was in the kitchen; and I was getting ready for dinner. The two boys were outside playing with the neighbors. I called them in for dinner. Andrew—four-year-old Andrew—runs in, red-faced; and he’s all upset: “Mom, Mom! Michael’s breaking a commandment!” I thought: “Well, what did he do? Did he lie? Is he stealing?” Andrew said, “Michael is breaking the adultery commandment.” [Laughter] This had my attention. I said, “What’s going on?” He said, “You called us in for dinner, and Michael said that he doesn’t want to eat dinner with our family. He wants to eat dinner with Joey’s family.” [Laughter]
You know, sometimes we're not that much different than my son, Andrew. He learned the rule/his commandment about what we're not supposed to do, but he didn't have any context of understanding it and applying it. I think that's often the case with Christians. We learn the rules of what God says to do and don't do, but we don't have a context of how to act it out and why it's even important.

Here's what I see, as I work with Christians on issues of sexuality. They have learned, from the church, what to think about certain sexual issues—like pornography, homosexuality, or even sex in marriage—but they have learned how to think about sex from a cultural perspective. They've been sexually-discipled by the world. We don't know how to solve the real problems; because we've just memorized the list of what God expects, without understanding God's heart.

What I want to share with you tonight are three things that I think help us understand the heart of God around sexuality. I'll just tell you that these are things that I've only learned, really, within the last ten years. Even though I'm a clinical psychologist; I grew up in a Christian home; I grew up going to church—these are things I didn't learn, along the way. They didn't equip me to deal with the kinds of things we've had to address in our marriage, in our parenting, and also in the culture at large. Are you ready to talk about these three things?—alright; here we go.

Number one: “Sex celebrates and cements your covenant.” Sex celebrates and cements your covenant. Sometimes, I'll have young Christians ask me this question: “Why would God care if we have sex outside of marriage? Can you show me a verse in the Bible that says you're not supposed to live with someone before you get married?—or have sex before you get married?”

You find in your Bible the verses that talk about what sexual immorality is/what fornication is; and then, maybe, they want to argue with you about the Greek words and what they really mean. What I'd rather do, than showing them a verse that says what's wrong, is bring them to verses that give God's vision for the purpose of sexuality. Because Moses, and Jesus, and Paul all said something like this, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and will cleave to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” When they're saying one flesh, they're not talking about spiritual intimacy, or emotional intimacy, or sharing a home; they're talking about sexual intimacy.

In Scripture, we see the link of God's design of sexuality was meant to be about covenant. In our world, most people, including many Christians, believe the purpose of sexuality is about self-expression. Christians will say, “How do I express myself, sexually, while staying in the boundaries of avoiding sin?”

The better perspective is: “How do I get God's heart for sex, that is all about this whole concept of covenant?”—because sexuality is all about covenant. Think about it this way—you're married; right?—you're in a covenant of marriage. Now, I want you to think:
For how many of you did sexual desire/sexual awakening—wanting to share your body and your life with someone—how many of you did that have an important part in making you want to get married? Nobody’s raising their hand. Come on, seriously! [Laughter]

Yes; I mean, our sexual desire is not just about: ‘I want to have sex with somebody.” It's: “I want to share my life, I want to share my body, I want to share everything with someone.” Our sexuality is our body's way of reminding us that we were not made to be alone, and that's a very good thing. So, you take that step of getting married—of making covenant promises that are very hard to live out. God says, “I'm giving you sexual intimacy as a way of marking/celebrating that covenant promise. It's a physical way that we celebrate the spiritual promise that we've made to each other.

Timothy Keller says that sexual intimacy within marriage is like a covenant renewal ceremony. It's a way that you do, with your body, what you have promised to do with your whole life. Sexual intimacy is the celebration/a reminder of the covenant promise.

Our bodies actually bear this out. The more we know about sexuality—and research and brain chemicals—the more we see this. One of the main brain chemicals that's released during sexual intimacy is the chemical, dopamine. Dopamine is the pleasure hormone—it's the reward hormone. It's the chemical that makes us want to say, “I want to do that again.” God created sexual intimacy to release a lot of dopamine in your brain. That's a wonderful thing, because it's your body's way of remembering and celebrating the joy and the fun of loving each other.

But the problem is that, in our culture, we want the dopamine without the covenant; right?—through internet pornography, through hooking up, through sleeping around. We want the party in our brain without the commitment in our heart—that's not how God designed it.

Let me give you an example of what that would be like. I live near Cleveland, Ohio—I was born and raised in northeastern Ohio. I was also raised to be a Cleveland sports fan. Do I have any Cleveland sports fans in the house? There you go. Look around—these are the most loyal people on the planet. [Laughter] Now, why do I say that?—because Cleveland sports teams—the Browns, and the Indians, and the Cavs—we're losers; [Laughter] but we still keep cheering!

Now, let's say that Cleveland got so discouraged about losing all the time that the mayor of Cleveland said: “Let's just change this; okay? Let's put together an awesome parade in downtown Cleveland to celebrate the Browns winning the Super Bowl,”—which they didn’t—but “Hey, let's pretend they did. Let's celebrate the fact that they won.” How pathetic would that be? That's like having sex outside of covenant. It's celebrating something that isn't real. On another note, I have to let you know that, in 2016, the Cleveland Cavaliers miraculously, by God's power, defeated the Golden State Warriors. We did have the celebration! [Laughter]
Now, why do I say all that?—because you are married. If you’re on this cruise, you have made the commitment of covenant; and Gods says: “It’s time to celebrate. It’s time to get some of that dopamine going. It’s time to have a parade.” You know, when we gather together and we worship God, we’re celebrating who He is; and in a similar way, a husband and wife have a private worship ceremony, remembering and celebrating the covenant they made.

Sex, also, cements our covenant. Another chemical that goes through our brains and our bodies when we have sex is the hormone, oxytocin, which is the bonding hormone or the cuddle hormone. Women—we have oxytocin going through our bodies almost all the time. If two women get together, and they hardly know each other—and they have coffee and they share deeply about their lives—it's like oxytocin is flowing: “You’re my best friend! We're going to always talk.”

Guys, you think we're crazy when you see that happening; right? It's because you don't have oxytocin in your body. I've tried, and we can't put it in your food. [Laughter] Now, the only time, guys, that you get a really great dose of oxytocin is right after sexual intimacy—you know, your wife becomes like the queen for the day; you see her through different eyes; you feel close to her; you feel bonded.

So ladies, when your husband says that he feels closer to you after having sex, he means it—it's for real. When I understood this oxytocin effect, it kind of changed the way I approached sex in marriage. I used to think—my husband and I weren't getting along—that was the last thing I wanted to do—and now, when we're not getting along and we're having conflict—my mind says, “I need to ‘oxytocinize’ that man.” [Laughter] Ladies, you can use that. [Laughter]

[Studio]

Bob: We're listening to Part One of Juli Slattery talking about things she learned about sex that she never heard about in church.

Dave: I just got a new phrase for our house—[Laughter]

Ann: I'm going to use that, too—that's good stuff.

Dave: You can use that anytime you want, honey—just give me that look and say, “Oxy.” [Laughter] I'll be—

Bob: “It's time for some oxytocinizing to happen here.”

But the point is—it's counterintuitive.

Ann: Yes.
**Bob:** I mean, who—in the middle of tension and conflict—says, “This is what we ought to do to draw closer to one another”?

**Ann:** —especially for a woman—

**Bob:** Yes.

**Ann:** —because our heart’s not there; we don’t necessarily feel like it. I think Dave could feel like it; but for a woman—we’re so tied, emotionally, to the relationship—that that is very counterintuitive.

**Bob:** Trust is involved—being open/sharing myself—being safe with you: “I don't feel safe with you when we’re in conflict; so now, I'm just supposed to open myself up to you?”

**Ann:** Right.

**Bob:** So, we understand the counterintuitive nature; but I think what Juli is saying—and I think it’s really significant here—is that, if you think you’re going to help resolve conflict by just freezing each other out, that’s just going to deepen the isolation in marriage.

**Ann:** —and even the wounds. Yes; it pulls you apart.

This is very different in thinking for most people—like: “What?!” I like it; I think it works.

**Dave:** I like that you like it. [Laughter] That’s good—that’s good to hear.

It is—once she got into it—the brain is just fascinating—that God created it that way—that a husband and wife are bonded, even chemically, spiritually, emotionally, physically. That is such a beautiful picture of oneness.

**Bob:** Dave’s going, “When can we get to Part Two of this message?” [Laughter] And we’re going to get there.

**Ann:** And let me just clarify—as we talk about intimacy in a marriage relationship, we’re not talking about any kind of abusive situation that would be going on between a couple.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Ann:** This is in the confines of a safe relationship, where a woman is trusting her husband, and he’s not harming her in any way.

**Bob:** Yes, conflict is still going to occur in those safe relationships—

**Ann:** Right.
Bob: —but if a woman is in an unsafe situation, that's a different deal; and that's where you need help and counsel—

Ann: Exactly.

Bob: —you need advice. That's a good observation.

I want to make sure I remind our listeners, before we're done here today, about the 2020 FamilyLife Love Like You Mean It marriage cruise. You guys are going to be on the cruise with us. We have a great lineup of speakers and artists who are joining us. Dennis and Barbara Rainey are going to be on the cruise with us; Charlie and Kirstie Dates are with us; Dr. Gary Chapman is on the cruise. All the information is available at FamilyLifeToday.com.

I mention it because we are in “Countdown to Sellout mode,” here, at FamilyLife. We expect, by the end of June, we will have completely sold all the cabins on the cruise. We're 90 percent sold right now; and if you are interested in being with us on the Love Like You Mean It marriage cruise, Valentine's week next year, this is the time to call 1-800-FL-TODAY—get more information; reserve your stateroom.

If you have any questions about the cruise, give us a call. Right now, our team has agreed that, if you'll call this week, they're offering FamilyLife Today listeners $300 per couple off the cost of your stateroom, along with some other incentives for you to join us on the cruise next year. All the information is available when you call 1-800-FL-TODAY; or you can get more information, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com.

The President of FamilyLife, David Robbins, is here with me. We started with about 2600/2700 cabins available, and we're down to maybe 300 still left. So, if listeners want to join us, now is the time to get in touch with us. And they should expect, not just fun and warm temperatures in February, but they should expect an encounter with God.

David: You're right, Bob. We had two couples, who joined us on last year's cruise—friends of ours who came with us—and it was fun to see what they encountered on this cruise. Both of them were in pretty good places, spiritually, and were doing well—but just to get the space/to get the constant encouragement—one of them just went on and on about: “I just didn't know what to expect. I knew it would be fun; but yet, to get poured into in this way—to be ministered to, to continually be encouraged, and the Word continued to be preached over me, and practical stuff around intimacy and communication.” They were blown away. I was already proud of FamilyLife Love Like You Mean It marriage cruise, but it was just so fun to see it through friends’ eyes and to see how deeply they were ministered to.

Bob: Well, again, if you'd like to join us on the 2020 Love Like You Mean It marriage cruise, this is the week to call to take advantage of the special offer we're making for
FamilyLife Today listeners and make sure that you get a cabin booked before they're all gone: 1-800-FL-TODAY is the number for the Love Like You Mean It marriage cruise.

Now, I hope you can join us back again tomorrow. We’re going to hear Part Two of Juli Slattery's message about the importance of understanding God's design for sex in our marriage and living that out, as husband and wife. We'll hear from Juli tomorrow. I hope you can be with us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas; a Cru® Ministry. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

We are so happy to provide these transcripts to you. However, there is a cost to produce them for our website. If you’ve benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider donating today to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2019 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com