




HOW DO WE KNOW IF WHAT WE'RE TEACHING ABOUT SEX IS ACTUALLY HEALTHY?

In 2019–2020, award-winning author Sheila Wray Gregoire, researcher Rebecca Lindenbach, and statistic expert Joanna Sawatsky embarked on an ambitious project: the largest study ever done of Christian women's marital and sexual satisfaction. They wanted to ask, **"Do our evangelical resources for sex and marriage point readers to healthy relationship dynamics or unhealthy ones?"** So they:

- Surveyed 20,000 women, asking each at least 130 questions.
- Fleshed out findings with intense focus groups and interviews.
- Poured over modern peer-reviewed research on what leads to healthy marriages and healthy sex lives.
- Assessed best-selling evangelical sex and marriage books by creating a rubric based on research findings to identify harmful and helpful materials.

This report does three things. First, it shows what teachings in these books were especially damaging to the 20,000 women surveyed. Second, it suggests ways to reframe how we talk about sex and marriage so that we promote relationship health while keeping Jesus at the center. Finally, it shows how evangelical best-selling books fared against the rubric of healthy sexuality--and we invite you to use this rubric yourself.

You can find further information on the outcome of the survey in *The Great Sex Rescue: The Lies You've Been Taught and How to Recover What God Intended* (Baker Books, March 2021).





PROBLEMATIC BELIEFS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

These beliefs, found peppered throughout our Christian bestsellers, are correlated with negative marital and sexual outcomes for women.



HARMFUL TEACHING:

All men struggle with lust; it is every man's battle.

Women report worse sex and unhappier marriages if they believe lust is a universal, constant battle for men. For more survey results and for stories related to this finding, read chapters 5 and 6 in The Great Sex Rescue.

Women who believe lust is every man's battle are:

- 79% more likely to have sex only because they feel they must
- 59% less likely to be frequently aroused during sexual activity with their husbands
- 51% less likely to report their opinions being just as important as their husbands'
- 135% more likely to be frequently afraid their husbands will look at pornography or other women

And this belief affects libido too! Only 47.9% of women report having the same or higher libido than their husbands if they believe lust is every man's battle. Among those who *don't* believe this message? 57.7% report having the same or higher libido.

HARMFUL TEACHING:

A wife is obligated to give her husband sex when he wants it.

Women report worse sex if they have sex out of a sense of obligation. Find more survey results and read stories related to this finding in chapters 9 and 10 of The Great Sex Rescue.

Women who believed this *before marriage* are:

- 37% more likely to experience primary sexual pain

Women who believe this *currently* are:

- 29% less likely to frequently orgasm
- 24% less likely to be satisfied with the amount of foreplay their husband does

HARMFUL TEACHING:

Wives should have frequent sex with their husbands to keep them from watching porn.

Women report worse sex and less marital happiness if they believe they must have sex with their husbands to keep them from watching pornography. Find more survey results and read stories related to this finding in chapter 6 of The Great Sex Rescue.

Women who get married believing they need to have sex with their husbands to help prevent their porn use are:

- 19% more likely to experience significant primary sexual pain
- 37% more likely to report having sex only out of a sense of obligation
- 65% more likely to be frequently afraid their husbands will look at porn or other women

HARMFUL TEACHING:

Boys will want to push girls' sexual boundaries.

High school girls who believe they must be sexual gatekeepers grow up to be less sexually satisfied in marriage and to be less happy in their marriages. Find more survey results and read stories related to this finding in chapter 4 of The Great Sex Rescue.

Girls who grow up believing this message, once married, are:

- 59% more likely to engage in sex only because they feel they must
- 34% more likely to say they could “take or leave” sex
- 24% less likely to orgasm frequently
- 58% more likely to be uncomfortable with how their husband looks at other women when they are in public
- 47% more likely to report not feeling “heard” when in conflict with their husbands

For expanded survey results, please see *The Great Sex Rescue: The Lies You've Been Taught and How to Recover What God Intended* (Baker Books, March 2021).

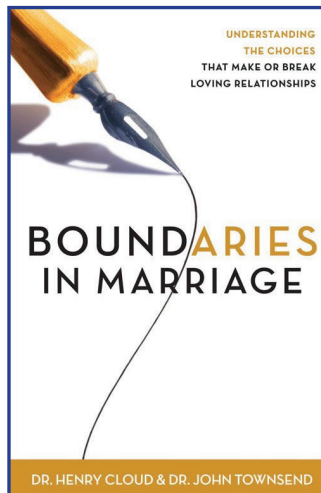
RESCUING AND REFRAMING

A large part of *The Great Sex Rescue* is showing how we can talk about sex in a much healthier way which is more in line with Jesus' teaching. Here are some examples:

<i>Instead of Saying...</i>	<i>Say...</i>
Women need to meet men's sexual needs.	Each spouse should make the other's sexual pleasure their first priority.
Boys will push girls' boundaries.	You are capable of resisting temptation, and you are responsible to not violate anyone else's boundaries.
All men struggle with lust; it is every man's battle.	Lust is a battle many people struggle with. In Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin but to the Spirit. When the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.
Men are visually stimulated.	People are visually stimulated, some more than others, and often, but not always, men to a greater degree. But being visually stimulated does not mean you are doomed to lust.
Bounce your eyes to ensure you never become tempted by women around you.	Treat and respect women as whole people made in the image of God.
The reason men watch porn is because they're not getting enough sex at home.	It is not your spouse's responsibility to keep you away from pornography.
If a man is lured into an affair, it is likely because his wife was not meeting his sexual needs.	You have a responsibility to stay faithful to your spouse regardless of what is happening in your marriage. If there are big problems in your marriage, seek help. Do not have an affair.
Women just don't have that need for sex.	If your wife has no libido, let's figure out why.
Men want sex.	People want sex.
Men have the higher libido.	In marriage, one spouse may have the higher libido, and who that is may change throughout the marriage.
Your husband has authority over your body.	God wants sex to be a mutual, loving experience.
Do not deprive your husband.	Sex is a vital part of a healthy marriage relationship that you are both meant to enjoy.

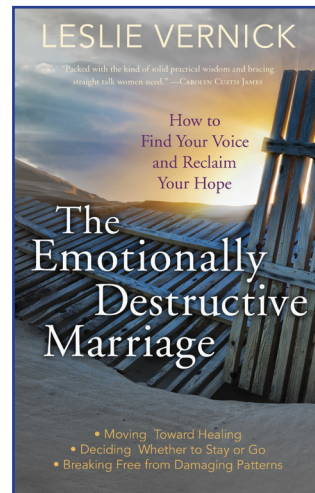
HEALTHIER RESOURCES To CONSIDER

For help with difficult marriages:



Boundaries in Marriage

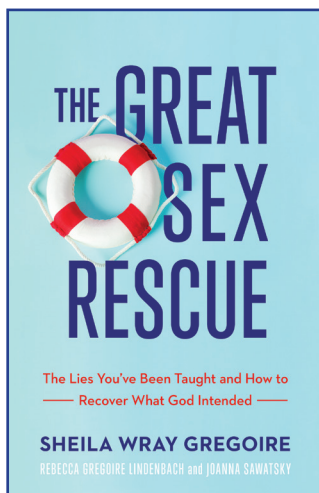
by Dr. Henry Cloud and John Townsend



The Emotionally Destructive Marriage

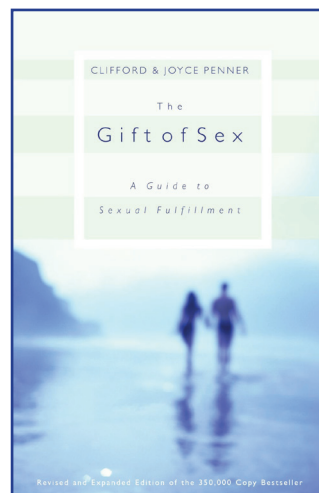
by Leslie Vernick

For help with sex:



The Great Sex Rescue

by Sheila Gregoire, Rebecca Gregoire Lindembach, and Joanna Sawatsky



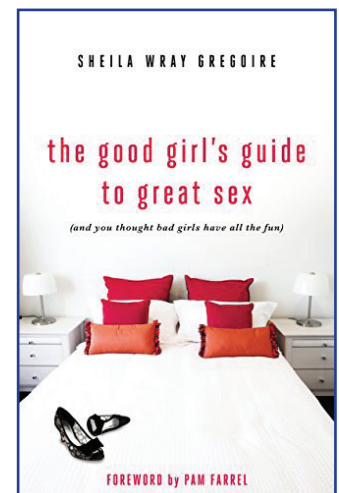
The Gift of Sex

by Clifford and Joyce Penner



31 Days to Great Sex

by Sheila Wray Gregoire



The Good Girl's Guide to Great Sex

by Sheila Wray Gregoire