

## **A Perfect Gift from a Perfect God**

Imagine this scenario. I know my daughter absolutely loves sushi. So to show her how much I love her, I make an entire tray of the most exquisite California Rolls you've ever seen or tasted. I leave them on the top shelf of the fridge with a note that says, "Enjoy! I love you!"

But days later, I notice she hasn't touched them. I inquire, "Erin, why have you not enjoyed in the sushi I made for you?"

She replies, "I was afraid you'd judge me if I enjoyed them too much."

I respond, "What? But I made them especially for you – for your pleasure! Why in the world would you fear I'd judge you for indulging in them?" If anything, I feel hurt that she hasn't allowed herself to enjoy them at all.

Doesn't make sense, does it? Nor does it make sense for us to fear indulging in sexual intimacy within marriage when this is the exact exquisite gift God has created especially for our enjoyment. Perhaps rather than fear offending God with our sexual expression, we should fear offending God by our lack of it.

Granted, there are some religions that expect followers to abide by certain sexual guidelines, such as abstaining from sex at certain times during a woman's menstrual cycle, or refraining from using artificial forms of birth control. I encourage you to talk openly with your pastor, priest, rabbi, or spiritual leader about any spiritual obstacles you are facing in your pursuit of becoming a sexually confident wife. Working together, you, your husband, and the spiritual leader that serves as a mediator between you and your Higher Power can surely come up with a workable solution to whatever problems may be holding you back.

Even if you hold no religious beliefs at all, a case can still be made that women should feel the freedom to embrace their sexuality and enjoy being sexually confident wives. How so? Because you're a human being, and in case you haven't noticed, it's in every human being's nature to be sexual in some form

or fashion. To assume that women shouldn't be sexual is like assuming that a frog shouldn't jump or a bird shouldn't fly.

## **Following the Pattern**

Everything in the world has a purpose, and a pattern which it naturally and instinctively follows in order to fulfill its purpose. If we examine the pattern that human beings naturally and instinctively follow, you'll notice that we have an undeniable tendency to gravitate over and over again toward four things: eating, drinking, sleeping, and sex. Researchers have identified these as the four "pleasure centers" of the brain – pleasure centers which constantly cry out for satisfaction. This is how humans are wired. Those four pleasure centers are where we live, or at least, where we should be living.

When we grow hungry, we don't feel the need to apologize for eating, right? No one casts a stone at us when we become thirsty. We haven't sinned when we fall asleep at the end of a long day. There's absolutely no shame in experiencing hunger, thirst, or exhaustion. So why should human beings feel shame when our sexual appetites cry out to be fed? Why do we (sometimes subconsciously) fear displeasing the God we worship when we experience a desire for sex? Isn't that how humans are designed by God? Aren't we just following the pattern? Fulfilling our purpose? Yes, we are. And to try to deny that purpose or reinvent that pattern because of the social taboos we've allowed to brainwash our thinking is nothing short of heresy.

*This material is excerpted from Chapter 15 of The Sexually Confident Wife, written by Shannon Ethridge and published by Broadway Books, a division of Random House.*