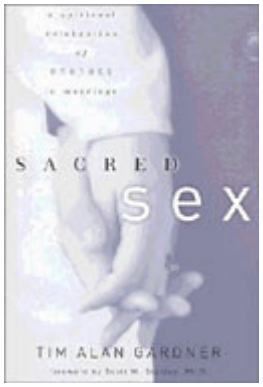
Review: Sacred Sex



One of the reasons, I have discovered, that I like blogging is the opportunity to express my thoughts about things that I otherwise wouldn't, but should. One of the biggest examples of this is reviewing books that I read. So here is my first blogged book review. As I finish a book, I'll hope to review it here, for my own edification if nothing else!

So here's hoping this first review doesn't cause my blog to be filtered by overzealous keyword filters!

Tim Alan Gardner's *Sacred Sex* is one of the better Christian books on sexuality that I've read. It differs from the "stock standard" (and now somewhat outdated) Christian books on sex, such as Ed Wheat's *Intended for Pleasure*, LaHaye's *The Act of Marriage*, or Penner's *The Gift of Sex* in that it's consideration is not so much about sex education of the practical tips for newlyweds variety. There isn't a single "diagram" in the book! Gardner's emphasis is to consider the *spirituality* of the sexual (and thus, of course, marital) relationship.

The author's intent is to help couples experience a joy and freedom and *strength* of relationship that is born out of a sense of God's delight, God's presence, and a *unity* that is precious and holistic. The *point* of the sexual relationship is about this unity. The subtitle says it all – "A spiritual celebration of **oneness** in marriage."

This doesn't mean that Gardner is afraid to confront the issues. He acknowledges the reality that sex is handled by the world in a destructive manner – he talks about the "horsemen" of sexual abuse, pornography, "casual" sex, and broken promises (including adultery). He is frank about the poor

state of the sex lives of many ordinary marriages – differing appetites, mishandled communications, and resigned indifferences.

He is, as they say, "frank but not crass," occasionally blunt, but never titillating. In short, he handles the subject well. I can see why those who have worked with people who have struggled with pornography or other sexual addictions have said that this is one of the few books on sex that they would recommend to people in such a situation.

A premise of the book is the inherent interplay of marriage covenant, sexual relationship, and intimacy and oneness. A definitive quote comes from page 196 of the book:

> *Since marriage has always been defined by God as two becoming one, the sexual union of a wife and husband is the perfect, God-intended oath sign that a marriage has been established. We speak an oath with our vows; we seal that oath with our bodies. Together, our words and our action form a covenant. And once again we see why God so forcefully opposes sex outside of marriage. It's not because He is a kill-joy Creator who goes out of His way to steal our fun, but rather because He created sexual intimacy to be so much more than self-pleasure. Sex is not only part of the covenant of marriage, but it functions in the creation of the covenant. Sex is the divine seal.*
>
> *Moreover, sexual intercourse reestablishes the covenant each time it is celebrated…*
>
> *This covenant theology of marriage and sex ties together everything we've been discussing: the holiness of sex, the mystery of sexual oneness, and the worship that happens when we acknowledge God's presence during our intimate celebration. All these aspects of sacred sex are protected by this elected relationship of obligation. The marriage covenant is what drives us towards each other in times of joy and in times of sadness. It's what causes us to ache to be with each other when we're apart… Each time we enter into the*

> *holy act of sex, we again pronounce our solemn declaration: "I do. I still do."*

This book isn't for everyone. Unmarried persons, I suspect, would find little immediate application. Those who have a significant amount of brokenness in their sexuality and background would need more than this book to find healing and restoration.

In the end, this book serves as an *affirmation* of marriage and celebrates and promotes oneness and intimate celebration that cements a God-ordained covenant through whatever stages of life, situations or occurrences might come along. A recommended read for any couple.

