

contents

A Personal Note to You / 10

Chapter 1.	I've Got Power	12
Chapter 2.	Me, Pursue Passion?	31
Chapter 3.	God's Got an Opinion!	47
Chapter 4.	Making Truth Stick	62
Chapter 5.	What Kind of Love Are You Making?	78
Chapter 6.	Pursuing Pure Pleasure	96
Chapter 7.	Exposing Counterfeit Intimacy	115
Chapter 8.	Debt-Free Intimacy	135
Chapter 9.	The Passion Priority	154
Chapter 10.	Becoming a Smokin' Hot Mama	172

Notes / 188

Acknowledgments / 190

Discussion Guidelines / 191



I've Got Power

A Bible study on sex for women.
Now, that's different.

We've got news for you—God cares about sex. He created it. And He cares about your intimate relationship with your husband. He cares deeply about your heart and the wounds you may have been carrying around for many years.

Why study what He has to say about sex?

Because Jesus is the Healer.

He is your Redeemer.

He is the One who restores.

Your God is able to overcome any barrier.

We know that you have barriers in your marriage.

We have had them too and have learned to study God's truth and fall upon His grace in the midst of it all. So buckle up as we dive into *Passion Pursuit*.

When I Began to Pursue Passion

When I (Juli) had been married about ten years, I noticed that intimacy in my marriage had become, well, boring. In fact, I was so bored with the "same old" intimacy that I calculated in my mind approximately how many times my husband and I had probably done the same thing. I figured that, if we had sex on average twice a week, that was about 100 times a year or 1,000 times over ten years of marriage. Yeah, I know. Who thinks like that? The next thought I had was, *Something's gotta change. My bedroom ceiling just isn't that fascinating!*

That little mental exercise was a wake-up call for me. I wanted sexual intimacy in my marriage to be fun, new, and creative. If sex was dull after ten years, how would I feel after thirty years of marriage?

CHAPTER ONE

THEME:

You have power, the power to build a house of intimacy by God's design.

THEMEVERSE:

"The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down."

(Proverbs 14:1)

Regardless of where your marriage is, it's time for a wake-up call. Passion doesn't just happen—it must be pursued, sought after, and longed for. Unfortunately, most marriages get stuck when it comes to passion, romance, intimacy.

Pain simmered in Karin's eyes:

Sex is so overrated. What is the big deal anyway? Passion walked out our bedroom door with the first baby and has never returned. Making love has become, "You touch me here, I touch you there, you move inside me, and it's over before it's begun." And that is supposed to make me feel close to my husband? There are nights that I cry myself to sleep, drowning in isolation while he slumbers in a distant land right next to me.

Joy danced in Shannon's eyes:

Our intimate oneness grows deeper, better, more fun every year. Sex is where we escape from life and delight in the gift of each other. The intimacy we share, the exquisite pleasure we give, brings such joy. We can leave our hiding place of love refreshed—better prepared to face kids, problems, all of real life. How I thank God for His amazing gift of sexual passion.

We rejoice with Shannon but know that many wives identify with Karin. Perhaps the most depressing feeling a woman can have is absolute helplessness to change intimacy in her marriage. Karin's words express this—she feels defeated and powerless in her loneliness.

We want you to understand that you don't need to feel powerless! God has given you power to create intimacy in your marriage. In fact, we believe that every wife is actively using her power to either build or tear down intimacy. The key is that most women don't even know they have power, and they certainly don't understand how they might be using it to destroy the oneness they long for.

Although *Passion Pursuit* is about sexual intimacy in marriage, we recognize that sexual passion was never meant to occur in a vacuum. It is intimately intertwined with emotions, security, communication, and other vital aspects of your marriage. So we want to spend our first week with you looking at the "big picture" of intimacy in marriage.

The stereotype some women have of a "Christian wife" is one of weakness—a woman who lets her husband dominate the home. Through generations, the message has been passed down that God wants women to be weak, subservient, and helpless in marriage. Newsflash: this is *not* God's design for you as a wife.

Read the theme verse, Proverbs 14:1. Does this proverb sound like one that promotes weakness in women? On the other hand, does this proverb seem to be promoting a woman dominating her husband? We believe that a key element of building intimacy in your marriage is the question of how you use your power.



Get out your highlighter because what we are about to share needs to sink to the core of your being:

A woman can make two vital mistakes that may result in the destruction of her marriage: The first is to ignore or deny her power; the second is to abuse her power.¹

Whether through subtle or overt actions, a wife can shatter her husband's confidence and trust and sabotage his leadership ability through the misuse of her power in marriage. The philosopher Goethe expresses it well:

If you treat a man as he is, he will stay as he is. If you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become that bigger and better man.

We believe that within every man is a "bigger and better man." In some husbands, that hero may be emerging. In others, he may be hidden deep beneath layers of shame, anger, insecurity, or doubt. Your call as a wife is to use your abilities and influence to bring forth the bigger and better man within your husband. It is neither an easy task, nor one that will be quickly accomplished. In fact, it may take a lifetime. However, continually developing the bigger and better man in your husband is critical if you want to achieve deep intimacy and trust in your marriage.

A woman never marries the man of her dreams. She helps the man she married to become the man of his dreams.²



DAY 1

Your Power Zone: Respect

In building your marriage, your "power zones" directly correspond to your husband's need for respect, companionship, and sexual fulfillment. Over the next three days, we'll look at what God has to say about each of these.

Today, we want you to think specifically about your husband's need for respect and how that translates to a power zone for you. Your respect means so much to your husband because you know him in ways that no one else does.

You know his weaknesses and insecurities. You've seen him fail in the past. You know his faults but by respecting him, you choose to believe in him and to focus on what is worthy of respect.

♥ **1. Let's jump right into a very familiar and important passage on marriage: Ephesians 5:33. What do God's instructions to wives in this passage say about how to use power to promote intimacy?**

♥ 3. How does God's teaching to wives about respect correlate to a man's deep need to feel adequate and capable? What do you think happens to a man when he does not feel respected by his wife?

God calls us to be like Sarah, Abraham's wife. If you want to learn more about her, read Genesis 16–21. Sarah wasn't a silent or weak woman; she had opinions. However, she had a reverent attitude toward her husband—a husband who made some very BIG mistakes! In 1 Peter 3:6 we read: "You are her (Sarah's) daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear."



♥ 4. Read 1 Peter 3:6 and then list three fears that keep you from meeting your husband's need for respect.

♥ 5. Imagine that you have been invited to a bridal shower for a young friend. You've been asked to write a letter to this young bride about the *power of respect* in her upcoming marriage. Write your letter in the space below.

♥ 6. Within the area of respect, you are either building or tearing down intimacy in your marriage. List several actions that reflect your marriage under each of the columns below:

RESPECTFUL ACTIONS THAT BUILD

DISRESPECTFUL ACTIONS THAT TEAR DOWN

♥ 7. What is one thing you will do in the next twenty-four hours to communicate respect to your husband?





DAY 2

Your Power Zone: Companionship

Get ready to focus in on your husband's second great need—the need for companionship. Again, because companionship is a deep need in your husband, it becomes a power zone for you. God makes it very clear in Scripture that man needs a woman to be his companion. “God said, ‘It’s not good for the Man to be alone; I’ll make him a helper, a companion’” (Genesis 2:18 MSG).

Imagine that you completely understood your husband's deep need for respect, but you stopped right there. Your entire relationship with him was built around respect. You listened to him and endorsed his every thought and decision. Is that the type of wife you want to be? The wife your husband desires? The wife God calls you to be?

While respect is vitally important, it is not your husband's only need. God created you to be your husband's friend and his trusted teammate.

The dictionary defines companionship as, “the state of being with someone.” One husband said it this way: “To a man, companionship is more than just being in the same room together. Companionship is about shared space—being side by side, shared purpose—common goals or interests, and shared commitment.”

So how does a woman who is convinced friendship comes through deep sharing create companionship with a husband whose view of companionship is very different? One writer said it like this:

HOW TO TREAT A WOMAN

Wine her. Dine her. Call her. Hold her. Surprise her.
Compliment her. Smile at her. Listen to her. Laugh with her.
Cry with her. Romance her. Encourage her. Believe in her.
Pray with her. Pray for her. Cuddle with her. Shop with her.
Give her jewelry. Buy her flowers. Hold her hand.
Write love letters to her. Go to the ends of the earth and back again for her.

HOW TO TREAT A MAN

Show up naked. Bring chicken wings. Don't block the TV.³





Are we suggesting you show up naked, bring food, and don't block the TV? No . . . but we are suggesting that you remember you have power in companionship. You were designed to be your husband's trusted teammate, completer, and friend. God says friendship is a deep need in your man.

Companionship is many things. Let us share two important aspects of deep friendship.

Companionship is sharing life with your husband.

Now, you might think, *I try to share life with my husband all the time, but he's not interested.* Here's the catch—sharing life doesn't just mean talking about life. Let's put it this way: **Men like to do life together while their wives like to process life together.** What does your husband like to do? Hike? Watch movies? Golf? Build? We are *not* suggesting that you have to go hunting with your husband—although you might choose to do that. But ask yourself this question, "What activities do my husband and I enjoy together?"

 **1. Read Genesis 2:18–20. Why do you think God asked Adam to name all the animals right before He created his companion?**

 **2. What are a few ways your husband would like for you to "share life with him" and "be his friend"? (You might want to ask him!)**

GETTING PERSONAL
WITH *Linda*



If a psychologist had given Jody and me personality and temperament tests before we

married, he might have said, "Stop

and think before you say I do!" Jody

and I are not just different, we are

extremely different. Jody is a thinker,

I'm a feeler. He is Mr. Flow With It. I

love structure. I like relational movies

(he would call them soppy). He likes

science fiction movies, playing chess,

studying theology, and astrophysics.

One year for our anniversary, I treated

him to an intellectual cruise where

he studied the nature and origin of

the universe. He loved the academic

stimulation. I loved looking out at

the glorious azure blue ocean and

studying in depth about intimacy with

my Abba Father. As different as our

interests are, we always found joy in

ministering together and parenting

our kids. Our kids now have kids of

their own. After almost fifty years of

marriage, Jody and I are still different,

but we encourage each other in our

"differentness" and seek to find things

we enjoy together. Taking hikes in the

mountains, camping in the summer,

and mentoring younger couples brings

intimacy and joy.



GETTING
PERSONAL
WITH

Juli



How would you like to be married to a marriage and family “expert”?

Although Mike loves to tell people, “I’m sleeping with my therapist!” he’s not so keen about living with someone who can “pull rank” whenever we get in an argument. If, for example, we disagree about how to discipline one of our boys, I could remind him that “I’m Doctor Juli Slattery. I think I know a little more than you do about discipline!” This is a prime example of how I could use my strength to threaten my husband instead of building him up. As I learn to use my power wisely, I see Mike appreciating my knowledge and experience as a psychologist. It is a resource for him rather than something that gives me the upper hand. But I have to choose to complete him with my strength rather than compete with him.



3. Read Proverbs 31:10–31. List the ways you see this woman being a strong companion to her husband.

Companionship is lending your strength to your husband. Your strengths can be used to compete with your husband or to complete him. For example, you may have more insight into relationships than your husband does. Do you use your “woman’s intuition” to help him or to keep the upper hand?



4. “The heart of her husband trusts in her . . .” (Proverbs 31:11 NASB). Part of companionship is being a trusted teammate who is willing to bring up difficult issues and even confront when necessary. However, your ability to do this is dependent upon your husband trusting you. Do you think your husband believes that you have his best interests in mind? Why or why not?

Friendship takes work! Time together, communication, sacrifice, resolving conflict, communicating through difficult things. Friendship in marriage is no different. You don’t become friends just because you share a house, a budget, and kids. You have to choose to build a friendship with your husband.

♥ 5. How have you used your power of companionship to build or tear down intimacy with your husband?

♥ Action Assignment: What is one thing you can do this week to work toward becoming a better friend to your husband?



DAY 3

Your Power Zone: Sex


Sam and I had been married for about ten years when I really began to ask him how he felt about sex. I knew he liked it but I just didn't get what the big deal was. So I asked him, "Do you like sex better than apple pie (his favorite dessert)?" Sam said yes. "Do you like it better than mountain biking (his favorite activity)?" Sam said yes. "If you had to choose between sex and going on vacation, what would you choose?" Sam said, "Having sex on vacation!"—Dawn


Sexuality is a powerful force. Advertisers know this—they use sex to sell everything from cars to beer. Satan knows this—he has enlisted his army of demons to distort and pervert sexuality as God intended it. Prostitutes know this—they dress provocatively and use sex to gain income. And certainly God knows this—sex is His invention and He infused within the act the ability for a man and woman to enjoy exquisite pleasure but also to create new life. But do you know this? Do you realize that your sexuality is designed to be a powerful force in your marriage? This incredible power is God-given, specifically for you as a tangible way to give and receive the deepest love and intimacy.

Let us tell you a closely kept secret about men. Men don't talk about it because they often don't know how to put this secret into words yet they know it to be true with every fiber of their being.

Closeness for him comes when you are naked body to naked body.

One husband said it like this: "After I make love with my wife, I feel whole and complete. My life is at peace."

 **1. Have you ever considered that your husband's sexual needs give you power in your role as a wife? Think over the years of your marriage. Write a sentence describing how you have used your power in this area of your marriage.**

 **2. Yesterday you read Genesis 2:18–20. Read it again today through verse 25. God declares companionship as vital to a man and then He adds another need. Why do you think God mentioned both companionship and sexual intimacy in this passage?**

Most women know that sex is a powerful force. The Bible is filled with examples of men who made huge mistakes because of poor sexual choices, like David and Samson. But sex is not just a negative powerful force that ruins lives. It is designed by God to be a positive powerful force for a wife in marriage. God is very specific in Scripture about describing the powerful joys and beauty of sexual love.

 **3. Write Proverbs 5:18–19 here:**

♥ 4. How does this verse suggest that you use your sexual power as a wife?

♥ 5. Verse 19 says that a husband is to “always be transported with delight” (AMP) in his wife’s sexual love. Think about a time when you used your power wisely and transported your husband in delight through your love. What positive outcomes resulted from your choice?

♥ 6. Because sex is a power zone for a woman, it is tempting to use it to retaliate when you are angry or hurt. Reflect upon a time you foolishly abused your power by withholding the gift of sex as a means of punishing your husband. How did your actions and attitude impact “oneness” with your husband?

GETTING
PERSONAL
WITH

Juli



It was many years of marriage before I realized that sex was a powerful force in my marriage.

With the busyness of raising three boys, working, and managing life, I thought it was normal to let this aspect of marriage sit on the back burner. Honestly, sex just wasn’t a priority for me. Then I began to see that if I didn’t use my power in this area, I was allowing other women and sexual temptations to have more power in my husband’s life. I became jealous of that power—it’s mine! I am the one who is supposed to captivate Mike. I don’t want anyone else to have the power God gave me!



The purpose of *Passion Pursuit* is to focus on what God’s Word teaches about this one area of power. We want you to understand how beautiful your power is in the sexual area of marriage. We want to teach you how to allow God to reclaim and redeem your sexuality. We long to see marriages strengthened by sexual intimacy rather than destroyed by it. This is a work that God longs to do in *your* marriage!



DAY 4

Your Power Choice

The power that God has given you as a wife is like a three-legged stool. Although respect, companionship, and sexual intimacy are separate needs of a man, they also interweave and reinforce each other. When one leg of the stool is broken, the other legs are affected.

Sandy and Jim came to counseling because sexual intimacy in their marriage was dead. Sandy wanted to be intimate with her husband but he rarely seemed interested. Before marriage, Jim had talked endlessly about how much he looked forward to their sexual relationship in marriage. He couldn't keep his hands off Sandy. But now, he was completely withdrawn.

Through counseling, it became very evident that Sandy “wore the pants” in the family. She was a strong, opinionated woman who was often frustrated by her laid-back husband. Over their six years of marriage, their relationship had evolved into practically a mother-son dynamic—Sandy scolding Jim while he became more passive.

Eventually, Jim was able to communicate that the emotional climate of their relationship deeply affected his desire to be sexually intimate with Sandy. His wife's lack of confidence in him made its way to the bedroom.

Jim and Sandy's story makes it very clear that sexual intimacy doesn't occur in a vacuum. How you use your power in one area of marriage will build or tear down every aspect of intimacy.

As you dive into this study, you have a choice to make. Will you look intently at the power you have in your marriage? Will you be honest about how you have been using that power?

It's your power . . . it's your choice.

We understand that, for some of you, what you have read and heard this week has been challenging and even threatening. Based on our conversations with many women over the years, we know that your defenses might already be kicking into place. You might be thinking something like this:

“Why do I have to be the one to change? I go to all of the seminars, read all the books, but he won't lift a finger to learn to be a better husband.”

“I'm afraid to even hope for intimacy in my marriage. I've been hurt and disappointed too many times.”

“You just don't understand how difficult my husband is.”

“If I'm honest, I'd rather be in control than learn to be intimate in my marriage. It's more important for me to feel safe than to feel close to my husband.”





1. Do any of these statements represent how you are feeling as you dive into the topic of intimacy in marriage? If so, why?



2. What do you think about the message of Proverbs 14:1? Write a few sentences describing your unique power in marriage.



3. Why do you think a woman would make the conscious or subconscious choice to tear down intimacy in her marriage with her power?

Not every marriage will become deeply intimate because a woman chooses to use her power to build her husband. Some relationships are riddled with serious emotional and spiritual issues that take two people to address. Although God makes no promise of resurrecting your marriage, He does make promises about the blessing that follows when a woman chooses to be faithful. The Bible is filled with assurance that the Lord sees the choices you make and that He “rewards every man (or woman) for (her) righteousness and faithfulness” (1 Samuel 26:23).

The choice about how you use your power as a wife is not just about building intimacy in marriage but about being faithful to God and trusting His promises.

No one has the power to encourage your husband like you do. More than any other human being, you are the one who knows his deepest need, his vulnerability, his areas of sensitivity, his hidden weakness. You also know better than anyone his potential as a man, his areas of talent, and his hidden strengths. You are described as a “helpmate, a counterpart, the one who comes alongside of.” So ask yourself, “How do I help? How do I come alongside? How can I use the intimate knowledge of my man to build him up so that his strength may grow stronger?”



I have a favorite verse that has been a key to thankfulness flowing from me to my husband.

It is Philippians 4:8. I have it framed in my home because I need its wisdom continually.

Finally, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. (NASB)

I took the words of Philippians 4:8 and applied them to my husband in my journal. The first few days looked like this:


Sunday—True. *Jody is committed to truth, and he lives what is true.*

Monday—Lovely (Worthy of Respect). *Jody is amazing in the way he has saved for our retirement.*


Tuesday—Just. *Jody fights for what is right and just. Whether it is evolution and creation or a political issue, he is on the side of right (or what he is convinced is right).⁴*



One choice you can make today is to choose to see your husband the way God wants you to see him. Your husband will react not only to what you do or say but how you choose to view him. It may take a step of faith for you to remember why you fell in love with this man. Underneath his weaknesses are strengths that you may have forgotten to thank God for. Finding the resolve to use your power well begins with *choosing* to be thankful for who your husband is—not complaining about who you want him to be.

 **4. Write Philippians 4:8 on several 3 x 5 cards and tape them where you can read this powerful verse throughout the day, or type it into your smartphone, iPad, or computer.**

The verse doesn't say if **everything** is excellence and if **everything** is worthy of praise, fix your mind on these things about your husband. The word is **anything**. If you can find anything to praise your man about, dwell on that. Pretty amazing. And a key to your husband becoming a bigger and better man.

 **5. Meditate on Philippians 4:8. Ask God to show you praiseworthy qualities in your husband. List two or three here:**



6. Write a prayer to God thanking Him for your unique husband. Either show the prayer to your husband or write him an email, card, or letter expressing your thanks for who he is and what he does.

Bev wrote the following prayer based on Philippians 4:8:

Lord, I want to fix my eyes on everything about Gary that is true and honorable and right because Gary IS an honorable man. I want to think and act in admirable, pure, and lovely ways that make him feel safe in our relationship. I want to be a woman who is excellent and worthy of praise because he deserves no less. I want to put these things into practice—wrapped up with love and infused with a generous supply of humor, adventure, and fun. I want to keep learning and working and trying to be God's best so that God's peace will be a hedge of protection around our home, our lives, and our hearts.

When you choose to change your perspective, God changes you. Instead of seeing your husband as a workaholic, you see a disciplined man who knows how to show love through providing. Instead of an unexciting introvert, you see a man who is steady for you through the storms of life.

No matter how long you have been married, you can choose today to build intimacy in marriage with your power. Choose wisely. Speak positively. You hold power in your hands to create intimacy or distance with this man you love. And as you look to God, expect Him to do exceedingly, abundantly, more than you could ask.



DAY 5

The Secret Place: Intimacy with God

During the past four days, we challenged you to consider how to use the power you have as a wife to positively influence intimacy with your husband. We challenged you to look at how your power zones directly correspond to his basic needs for respect, companionship, and sex. We invited you to consider how you, as his wife, are uniquely qualified to fill these needs in a way no other person can. Now we're wondering: How did you respond?

Some of you are ready to dive right into the challenges. Others? Not so much.

"I want to use my power zones to make my marriage amazing but I try, I fail—I try again, I fail. Help me, God!"—Yoshiko, 28

"Respect? Companionship? Sex? I've got so far to go that I don't even know how to start."—Catherine, 37

"Power Zones? I just took power and used it like a club. Our intimacy is nonexistent."—Emily, 48

A loud chorus of wives join Yoshiko, Catherine, and Emily and say, "We can't build him up. We can't get past the disappointment and fears that intimacy represents." Throughout this study we'll ask you some difficult questions. We'll ask you to do hard things. You've already gotten a taste of this over the past few days. Perhaps you feel like the apostle Paul when he wrote:

"I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:18).


Maybe it seems like the marriage you long for and the marriage you have today are impossibly far apart. We know this can feel like a desperate place to be. But you're not in this alone. We are beside you as friends, mentors, and fellow wives who are still learning and growing. The very best news is that your Abba Father, the One who created marriage, is also with you. His

HOPE

Holy Spirit's name is Encourager, Comforter, and Helper. He will give you exactly the help and encouragement you need each week—even when you have to consider questions about sex.

You've been learning about how you can use your power zones to create deeper intimacy with your husband—this is important! But the best way to move toward deeper intimacy with your husband is to move toward deeper intimacy with the Lord. You need more than power zones . . . you need the Power Source. Where is the Power found? In developing a relationship with God.

Just as in a human relationship, intimacy with God is built over time as you make the choice to know Him. Each week on Day 5, we will encourage you in another aspect of growing in intimacy with God. We are calling this special time The Secret Place. This time alone with your Abba Father equips you with the wisdom you need to respond with grace in difficulty or with love to a husband who is not acting very lovable. Jesus, God's Son, not only taught about time alone with His Father, He regularly practiced it.

 **1. Read Mark 1:35 and Luke 5:16. What do you learn about Jesus and the importance of time alone with God?**



2. Read Matthew 6:6. What does this verse teach you about choosing to spend time with God?

When you choose to spend time alone with the Lord, no one will see you or reward you except your Father in heaven. Yes, it requires a sacrifice of time. You could use that time to get something done or perhaps to get an extra hour of sleep. It requires faith to believe that your time with the Lord will equip you with the power to build your marriage. Will you make it a priority?

Both of us have struggled over the years to make time alone with God a priority. Even with the best of intentions, life can get in the way and intimacy with God becomes a distant dream. We have learned, however, that we cannot do the difficult things that God asks without spending time with Him, being encouraged by His love and power. You will run into “walls” as you go through this study. Your time alone with God must be your power source if you want to change. Here are a few practical suggestions that will help you guard your time with God:

Find a place. Begin by finding a special place in your home where you can consistently be alone with God. Juli has a chair by the fireplace that is her space. Linda has a prayer chair carved in the rocks behind her home where she goes when the weather cooperates. When it doesn't, she snuggles on the couch with her Bible.

Establish a time. The next step is to carve out time to be with the Lord consistently. You might like the morning because the house is quiet. Or perhaps you are a night person. But we ask you to carve out time to study, reflect, to pray and pour out your heart to the One who loves you.



3. What is the best time and place for you to regularly spend time alone with the Lord?



4. What practical barriers could potentially keep you from developing an intimate friendship with God? How can you plan to prevent these barriers?
