

“Not Tonight, Honey”

Handling Your Wife’s Sexual
Rejection

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New Growth Press, Greensboro, NC 27404
www.newgrowthpress.com
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Cover Design: Tandem Creative, Tom Temple, tandemcreative.net
Typesetting: Lisa Parnell, lparnell.com

ISBN 13: 978-1-936768-64-6
ISBN-13: 978-1-938267-42-0 (eBook)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Green, Rob (Robert Eric)

Not tonight, honey : handling your wife's sexual rejection / Rob Green.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 13: 978-1-936768-64-6 (alk. paper)

1. Sex—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Sex in marriage—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. Wives—Sexual behavior.

I. Title.

BT708.G685 2012

248.8'425—dc23

2012024297

Printed in Canada

19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 1 2 3 4 5

Not tonight, honey”¹ must be three of the most annoying words a husband can ever hear.

You can probably think back to several times you heard those words and the events preceding them. You kissed your wife goodbye before you left for work. On occasional breaks you sent her a quick e-mail or text telling her that you loved her. You imagined the kids going to bed on time so that you and your wife could have some enjoyable time together, including sex. What happened? Everything was going according to plan until the “enjoyable time together” part. She wanted to go to bed! You couldn’t believe it. Bed! Seriously? Hello, Mr. Wonderful is here and the kids are asleep. Even now, you can feel your blood pressure rising and your irritation building.

Or what about the time she texted you to say that she couldn’t wait for you to come home. You almost left the office right then. You were ready to cancel your meetings, and you could have been half undressed before you pulled in the driveway. But you restrained yourself. Instead, you flirted a little throughout the day as you looked forward to the evening ahead. Unfortunately, by the time dinner was finished, homework was completed, baths were given, and bedtime stories were read, she was exhausted. Her flirting was gone, and she was simply too tired. You thought to

yourself that she had energy for dinner, for the kids, and for everything she did through the day—except you! It was irritating, really irritating!

I’m not sure I have met a married man who hasn’t experienced moments like these. I suspect you are reading this book because you know exactly what I’m talking about. So what should you do? How should you respond when your wife says “not tonight”?

I think you know that God is not pleased when you respond with outbursts of sinful anger, or manipulative ploys to get your wife to change her mind, or even self-pity that changes “not tonight” to “hardly ever” in your private thoughts. We all know there is a better way—a biblical way. Remember that when the Lord saved you, he wanted you to find your identity in Jesus, to live in ways pleasing to him, and to enjoy him beginning right now.

The question is really how you can do all that when you are faced with sexual disappointment. Let me say from the beginning that it is possible to respond in a way that honors God and that allows your marriage to be a picture of Christ’s love for his church. Here are four biblical principles that can greatly help you respond to those irritating “not tonight” moments with the grace of Jesus.

Respond to your rejection the way Jesus responded to his

Christ's earthly sufferings can teach you a lot about how to respond to your disappointment. Certainly his suffering and rejection far exceed what you face when your wife is not interested in sex, so I'm not making a one-to-one comparison. But it helps to know that Jesus really understands rejection *and* that his death on the cross gives you what you need to deal with it as he did.

Let's consider some of the things Jesus suffered. According to Matthew, people mocked him as he hung on the cross: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross"; "He saved others; he cannot save himself" (27:40-42). Despite the mockery and rejection, Jesus' response was to offer his life.

Do you remember what happened earlier, in the garden of Gethsemane? The disciples fell asleep even after Jesus asked them to watch and pray with him (Matthew 26:36-46). Later, Peter denied Jesus three times, and at least the last denial was within Jesus' hearing (Matthew 26:69-75; Luke 22:61).

In addition to the suffering of his Passion Week, the Gospels record hostile reactions toward Jesus by the crowds throughout his ministry. Despite it all Jesus responded with compassion and grace. Apart from the false teachers themselves, Jesus responded to people's rejection with compassion and kindness. He saw the