

The following chapter from

Kiss Me Again

was downloaded from the author's website:

www.barbarawilson.org

Praise for
Kiss Me Again

“Barbara Wilson asks the tough questions that get at the heart of lost intimacy. She shares openly from her own life, offering godly wisdom and practical help for those who want to rediscover the glorious oneness God offers for married couples.”

—LINDA DILLOW AND LORRAINE PINTUS, authors of *Intimate Issues*

“I’m positive that every woman will relate in one way or another. God has given Barbara Wilson the ability to teach women how to find true healing and hope. Her powerful message frees wives to embrace intimacy in marriage as He intended. Husbands, encourage your wives to read *Kiss Me Again*—or even better, read it with her. You’ll both be glad you did.”

—GARY SMALLEY, author of *From Anger to Intimacy* and
The Language of Sex

“Married women will do a huge favor to themselves and their husbands when they read *Kiss Me Again*. With compassion and insight, Barbara Wilson shows how to reignite the intimacy wives long for.”

—DR. KEVIN LEMAN, author of *Sheet Music* and *Have a New Husband by Friday*

“Barbara Wilson has provided an incredibly helpful tool in this book for anyone who is looking for sexual healing from their past. *Kiss Me Again* is practical and grounded. Don’t miss out on this powerful message.”

—DRS. LES AND LESLIE PARROTT, founders of RealRelationships.com and authors of *Love Talk* and *Crazy Good Sex*

“*Kiss Me Again* is an exceptional guide to through the shadows and snares of a sexual past. For every couple who wonders why sex is so much less than it could be, this book can help you break free of old memories and a divided

heart. I loved the unblushing honesty of Barbara's writing and immensely practical help she's offering. This is a book whose time is now."

—PAULA RINEHART, author of *Strong Women, Soft Hearts* and *Sex and the Soul of a Woman*

"This book has radically changed the face of our women's ministry! It brings radical change to lives, marriages, friendships, and relationships with God."

—RACHEL JOHNSTON, pastor of women's ministry, Bayside Church, Granite Bay, California

"Since Mary has gone through the sexual healing study, I've seen the both of us come to a more intimate relationship with each other and with God."

—A HUSBAND

"This book not only changed my life, it brought me back into the arms of my husband and to God where I belong."

—A WIFE

"I am so excited about my life with my husband today! I cannot explain to you how wonderful it was to wake up and see myself in the mirror as a whole and complete woman without one glimpse of shame or remorse!"

—A WIFE

"My wife communicates better, she has brought us closer in our relationship, she denies me less for sex and even initiates, she is more confident about her sexuality."

—A HUSBAND

Kiss
Me
Again

Restoring Lost Intimacy
in Marriage

Barbara
Wilson



MULTNOMAH
BOOKS



*This book is dedicated to every woman
who has trusted God to heal her past,
restore her present, and
reignite her future.
It's been an honor and joy
to have witnessed your journey.
An even greater privilege
to share your stories
in this book.*

Contents

Introduction	xi
1 Saying No When You Want to Say Yes	1
2 The “Superglue” Hormone	11
3 When Sex Doesn’t Bring Pleasure	25
4 Emotionally Divided	43
5 Where Does It Hurt?	63
6 A Plan for Healing	85
7 Say Good-Bye to the Past	105
8 Become Your Husband’s Best Friend	123
9 It’s Time to Be Lovers Again	143
10 Pass the Healing On	159
11 Common Questions, Helpful Answers	171
12 Close Today, Closer Tomorrow	181
Ten-Week Study Guide	191
Acknowledgments	203
Notes	205
Bibliography	210

Introduction

After I wrote *The Invisible Bond: How to Break from Your Sexual Past*, I began to hear from countless married women who identified with my story. Like me, they loved their husbands, wanted to stay married, but struggled with sex. They yearned for physical and emotional closeness with their mates yet shunned their intimate advances. They wished their sexual relationship could be more and were dismayed that it was not. They wanted to *want* to give themselves unreservedly to their husbands but could not.

Does this describe you? If so, you're not alone.

After spending the past several years speaking and writing on this topic and leading hundreds through sexual healing, I've come to believe that sex is a universal problem in marriages. Most couples—including Christians—have sex before marriage. The sexual revolution has affected us all, lowering our resistance to the pressure to initiate sex before marriage. Since the sexual revolution began, sexual promiscuity has increased with each generation. Now, forty-plus years later, we're reaping the consequences of our choices. The number of STDs has increased from just two prior to 1960 to more than twenty now.¹ The rates of divorce, out of wedlock pregnancy, abortion, and child abuse, as well as use of pornography, have all increased. And there's another unexpected and uncounted consequence of the sexual revolution and promiscuous sex—the emotional and physical dysfunction evident in marriages today.

But there's good news. No matter what is in your sexual past, God can heal your wounds and restore your marriage. God can heal the sexual issues you are struggling with in marriage. He can reignite your

desire and deepen your emotional bond with your husband. He's done it for me and countless others, and He wants to do it for you.

For the last four years I've been leading women through sexual healing using a Bible study that I wrote to accompany *The Invisible Bond*. What I've learned from these women led me to write this book. I've discovered that sex from the past is negatively impacting many marriages today. When most wives say no to sex now, it's because they said yes before. But as these women have trusted God to break past sexual bonds, heal their wounds, and restore their marriages, He has been faithful. Healing sets us free from our pasts so we can rebond with our husbands, letting us say yes once again.

HUSBANDS, YOU'RE INVITED TOO

While I have written this book for wives, if you are a husband, you can benefit from it too.

Your wife loves you and cares about your relationship. She wants to grow closer to you emotionally and physically. She desires that your marriage be the best it can be, but something is holding her back in the area of sex.

Perhaps you have felt hurt or frustrated by her disinterest in sex. That's understandable. Because she loves you, your wife longs to heal whatever is stealing her desire. That's why she is reading this book.

By engaging with her in this process, you'll help her feel safe and loved, which will help her to open up more fully with you. You'll demonstrate your love for her, and that you want to join her in achieving complete oneness, sexually and emotionally, in your marriage. In the process, you might discover that you need healing as well.

You can't fix your wife; only God can. But He will use you in this healing journey as you support, encourage, and walk alongside her. Healing will set her free. To love you more, to give herself to you more—without restraint emotionally and physically. And yes, that will result in better sex.

WHAT'S AHEAD

The first part of this book will help you understand how sex from the past may be affecting you and your marriage. It will give you insight and information about the emotional and sexual distance you may be feeling, as well as why your desire for sex with your husband has diminished.

The second part is all about healing. I'll walk you through specific steps to

- heal the wounds you've accumulated from your past,
- address current sexual struggles in your marriage,
- replace the lies you've internalized with God's truth, and
- rebond with your husband to restore the emotional and physical intimacy in your marriage.

Each chapter contains practical exercises, tools, and questions to help you apply what you are learning. At the back of the book is a study guide that will take you through deeper healing with God.

God loves you. He wants you to live in freedom and to delight in your sexual relationship with your husband. Many others have already followed this path to transformed lives and marriages. My prayer is that you'll say yes to God and embark on this journey. With His truth, you'll be set free.

Saying No When You Want to Say Yes

I never imagined I'd be writing about sex. If someone had told me even a few years ago that I'd be writing, speaking, and leading a ministry on sexual healing, I'd have had a good laugh. You see, I didn't enjoy sex very much, even as a young wife. It ranked right up there with doing dishes and changing diapers.

I thought I was the only one who felt this way, and I never talked about it with anyone. After all, Eric and I were the perfect Christian couple with the ideal family. The kind others might envy. We practically lived at church, and we attended a small group with other couples our age, learning and praying together. We served in our church, our community, and our children's school. We were great parents, great friends, great Christians, and great partners.

My husband was faithful, a good provider, a wonderful father. He helped around the house, came home after work, and didn't squander our money at the casino or bars. He went to church with me, shopped with me, and cuddled in bed with me. He loved me, and I loved him.

So what was my problem?

I wanted more. Our marriage was okay, maybe even good, but it wasn't great. Certainly not what I'd dreamed it would be or hoped it could be. Sounds selfish, I know. Many women, particularly those who are single or in violent, loveless, or faithless marriages, might have little sympathy for me. Some might have a few words to say *to* me. And I'd probably agree. In the museum of marriage, ours looked perfect. But as the saying goes, looks can be deceiving. In our case they were.

The struggle started early, within the first year, and twenty years and four kids later, it wasn't any better. Naively, wishfully, we would slam the bedroom door on our struggle each morning, hoping it would stay out of sight. Out of mind. But with our glances and glares, with our barely there kisses, and with the words we did and didn't say, we erected an invisible wall of wounds between us. No one knew we had a problem. Not even us.

It was easy for me to overlook this segment of our relationship when everything else appeared to be okay. But what I didn't realize was that the wall I was raising in our physical intimacy was blocking our emotional intimacy as well. And although I tried, I couldn't keep this part of our marriage isolated from the rest. It seeped into every part of our relationship, stealing our joy.

We didn't fight often, but when we did, it was always about sex. The fights always started the same way.

"Why don't you like sex?" my husband would ask.

"I don't know," I'd respond. I wanted to like it, wanted to want it, but no matter how many times I promised to try, it never got better. I loved my husband, but I didn't love *making* love. So the fights usually ended up on my side of the bed. It was my problem, after all. I didn't like sex and avoided it with premeditated skill. When I couldn't evade it any longer, I was often unresponsive, longing for it to be over. If I never had

sex again as long as I lived, I'd be *so* happy. And since my husband seemed to want sex all the time, I couldn't stand him much either at times.

I didn't understand why until God led us to fast from sex for a month. During that time Eric and I talked, especially about our struggles with sex. God began to show me how my past choices were limiting my ability to enjoy sex and feel emotionally close to my husband.

This revelation changed my life and put me on the road to healing.

DAMAGE FROM UNMARRIED SEX

You see, I lost my virginity when I was eighteen to the first boy I loved. I told myself it didn't matter because we planned to get married.

For the first ten months of our relationship, we made out a lot but didn't go all the way. As our emotional and physical intimacy grew, I began to trust him more. I felt I could depend on him to take care of me and put my well-being ahead of his own. After all, I wanted to spend my life with him, have children with him. I wanted him to be my protector and provider.

Then one day it happened. He might have planned it ahead; I don't know. We were alone in a park, and he decided that we'd been making out long enough. It was time to finish the deal. It took me by surprise, and somehow I couldn't say no. Plus, I loved him and trusted him. He wouldn't hurt me right?

Wrong.

It hurt. I didn't like it. I wanted him to stop.

Too late. He was finished. And I would never be the same.

I learned something about sex and men that day. It stayed with me, impacting my life and marriage until recently, when God healed my wounded heart. I internalized that sex is just for men's pleasure and that

they'll use women to get sex. I decided that men don't care how we feel as long as they get what they want. He loved me—so I thought. And yet what he did didn't feel like love. *If this is how a man treats me when he loves me, then men cannot be trusted*, my heart whispered. *Especially when it comes to sex.*

Feeling humiliated, vulnerable, and used, I subconsciously erected a guard around my heart that day, telling myself that I would never let anyone hurt me again this way. At the time I denied my feelings because I loved him and we were getting married. We were young, and we eloped without my parents' blessing, unaware that the sex we'd had before marriage had sentenced our relationship to a rocky start.

When our marriage ended after two shaky years, my life began to crumble. By the time I was twenty-one, I had experienced marriage, divorce, promiscuity, pregnancy, and abortion. Not what I, a pastor's daughter, had envisioned for my life.

Then I met Eric. He was my do-over. My second chance. I determined that things would be different this time, but once again we had sex before marriage. But it was no big deal, I reasoned. After all, sex is just sex. Right? And getting married would clean the slate, make all the wrongs right. Right?

It sounded good. But it didn't work. The sexual experiences I'd had with my first husband and with men after my divorce caused me to associate sex with something unpleasant. Whenever Eric and I had sex, I couldn't shake the old feelings of being used, humiliated, and vulnerable. And the shame, condemnation, and regret I felt because I'd had premarital sex with Eric, and others before him, caused me to shut down emotionally and physically. Not only did the wall keep me *in*, it also kept him *out*. I'd brought these negative associations into our marriage and

into our marriage bed. It inhibited my desire, enjoyment, and response to sex with my husband.

Can you relate? Is your marriage good, except for the sex?

As I speak on this topic, I hear similar stories over and over, all with this common thread: having sex before or outside marriage. Does that surprise you? With all the sexual pressures on us today, being a Christian doesn't guarantee virginity. It didn't for me, and I loved God and wanted to serve Him. A recent survey found that 95 percent of people will have sex before they get married, Christian or not.¹

Of course, sex before marriage isn't the only cause of marital sexual struggles. You can have problems with sex even if you were a virgin on your wedding night. After all, sex is a complex, changing dynamic in marriage, and many things can contribute to its challenges. Male and female differences in sexual need and desire, outside pressures, hormones, pregnancy, unmet emotional needs, and parenting can all play a role in fluctuating desire and enjoyment of sex. Emotional and sexual intimacy will also be impaired if one or both spouses have been unfaithful or have an addiction, whether it be to pornography, alcohol, drugs, gambling, or something else.

However, after talking with numerous virgin and nonvirgin couples, I've discovered that the struggles for the nonvirgin greatly exceed that of the virgin. I often hear things like

- "Why was it a struggle to resist sex before I was married, but now that I am married, resisting it is all I do?"
- "Why could my husband turn me on before marriage, but now he turns me off?"
- "What happened to the great sex?"
- "What's happened to me?"

Can you relate to these women who love their husbands but don't enjoy sex? Your body is there, but your mind is elsewhere. Lying stiff and unresponsive, you long for it to end.

Whether your past is mild or traumatic, whether you've had multiple partners or one or two—and even if the only person you've had sex with is your spouse—sex from your past can haunt you in the present, impacting you and your marriage in a negative way. If in the past you had unmarried sex, in the present, *sex has you*.

JUST SEX? HARDLY

Sex is a big deal. Our culture has told us that it is just a physical act, that we can have sex and then move on without consequence to the next partner, repeating the cycle until we get married. However, sex doesn't work that way.

Arlene started having sex when she was twelve. Unbelievable, I know. Who knows anything about sex at that young age? She didn't, but the fifteen-year-old boy from her church youth group did. While luring her with romance, he stole her innocence and childhood with sex. For several years they carried on a secret sexual relationship, one she despised and enjoyed at the same time. She knew it was wrong, yet she felt trapped. Still, she felt special, loved, and desired by someone older and more experienced than she. Although the relationship ended, Arlene's sexual activity was just beginning. With her view of herself now wounded and twisted by this experience, she went on to experiment with alcohol and more sex throughout her teen and college years.

When she was in her thirties and married with two children, she came to me seeking help. "I want to love Sam with my whole heart, but it feels like I have a black rubber band around my heart, constricting me,"

she said. I knew exactly what she meant. The black rubber band was the sexual wounding she'd experienced, not only as a child of twelve, but also in her adolescent and college years. All that sex—all those partners.

No big deal, the world says. It's just sex. Hardly.

The lies about sex are rampant, and the worst lie is that sex before marriage won't ruin sex in marriage. Not true. Many of the sexual struggles in marriage today are a consequence of the sexual past of one or both of the partners. The damage brought about by unmarried sex is immeasurable—to our bodies, souls, and spirits.

Having learned as single women to guard our hearts from being hurt with sex, we can shut down emotionally and sexually in marriage. We may withdraw and become passive, or we may become dominant and controlling. Rather than feeling sexy, we clothe ourselves in shame, pain, regret. The power, the games, and the self-protection we learned in single sex become patterns in married sex. Purposely or inadvertently, we use sex as a means to manipulate, control, or exert our own way. To reward and punish. To show our love or to withhold it. Even if we were once the initiator, we now hold back, waiting for our husband to pursue, yet willing him not to.

God designed sex to unite the souls and bodies of two people. Sex outside God's plan affects us below the surface, in our souls and spirits. When we've created these sexual bonds outside marriage, we rob our partners and ourselves of the lifetime commitment our union was designed to seal. When we break up and move on, we leave behind parts of ourselves and bring with us parts of every partner we've ever had.

The wounds caused by these invisible soul bonds leave deep scars, which lead us to rely on destructive tactics to protect ourselves. They keep us guarded, untrusting, and closed off. If we don't trust our spouses, we may resent their desire for sex and lash out in anger. We may lose our

desire for our spouses and fantasize about past lovers, or we may need pornography or alcohol to “get in the mood.” We may even engage in addictive sexual behavior.

Yet seldom do we connect our present struggles with our sexual pasts. Instead we think: *There’s something wrong with me. I married the wrong person. I should have married _____* [fill in the blank].

Most of us don’t seek help because we fail to recognize that yesterday’s sex is revisiting us today. Marriage is not the giant eraser we wish it were—magically wiping all the past away. Saying “I do” at the altar doesn’t erase all the times our body said “I do” in the past. Every time we have sex with someone, we’re creating the “one flesh” bond God talks about in Genesis 2:24. Although we’d like to believe that the bond is cemented with “I do” in the presence of witnesses, the truth is that God created sex to be the “I do” that bonds us together for life. (I’ll explain this in more detail in the next chapter.)

No wonder breakups involving sex are so painful, so wounding, so life changing. According to God and our bodies, every time we’ve had consensual sex with someone, we’ve married that person, and each breakup is a divorce. Breakups tear apart two who have literally become *one*. It’s a hard reality to grasp, especially if we’ve had sex with many people. We try to minimize its impact, to declare it’s no big deal. But our souls tell a different story: with each break up they absorb yet another blow as we limp on to our next pseudomarrriage, repeating the cycle over and over.

A VIRGIN...OR NOT?

Some of you reading this may be thinking, *None of this applies to my situation because I was a virgin when I got married.* Many Christians have

fallen for this deception—that sex only happens at intercourse, and that everything leading up to it is not sex.

That's what Beth thought. She convinced herself that she'd been a good girl by saving sex for marriage. But the only thing she'd saved was intercourse. Fifteen years later she was discovering how her sexual past was hurting her marriage. Although the news saddened her, she had hope—hope that through God's forgiveness and grace He could erase the past and heal the present.

For those of you proclaiming virginity on your wedding night, just how virgin were you? It's a seductive deception—this idea that sex only happens at intercourse. In reality, bonding occurs during sexual arousal and release, regardless of how it happens—intercourse or otherwise. Sadly, many of us were having sex long before our wedding night.

If this is you, let me say how sorry I am. But don't despair. I have good news.

GOOD NEWS

What God has done for me, He'll do for you. Not only can He break the invisible bonds you've created outside marriage, He can also heal the wounds they've caused.

Even the wounds you know nothing about.

Tell me, when was the last time you had sex with your husband? Honestly. For some it's been weeks, months, even years. For others it was just last night—but you were present in body only. Though you long for something more, you don't know how to get there. Until then, you're not looking forward to the next time or the one after that.

Do you find yourself exclaiming, "Finally, someone who feels like me"? Or, "Someone's finally asking the questions I've always been afraid

to ask”? If so, I’m excited for you, because God has the answers to all your questions, including why you say no to sex now and how you can say yes again.

One of my favorite Bible verses is Joel 2:25, which says, “I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten.” In other words, God wants to pay us back, to restore to us all that’s been stolen from us or destroyed. He’s a master at taking the messes we make of our lives and turning them into messages of hope and healing. That’s my story. It can be your story too. Just ask Arlene.

Arlene, whom you read about earlier, went through the sexual healing Bible study, and God healed her constricted, wounded heart. When asked to share what God has done in her life and marriage recently, she wrote:

My feelings of guilt, shame, and regret are gone. My past is now just that, in the past. The sexual bonds I made outside my marriage are broken, and I feel bonded solely to Sam, the way God designed. That black rubber band around my heart has snapped, and I can now give my husband my whole heart.

I couldn’t say it better. What God has done for Arlene, me, and countless others, He wants to do for you. I don’t know what your story is or the extent of your marital strife. But God does. What you’ve come to accept as status quo in your marriage doesn’t have to be. Although your secret struggles seem to have no end in sight, God tells you not to despair. He can restore you and your marriage to wholeness. He can take the mess of your life, your past, and turn it into a blessing, a message of hope and joy.