

Social and ethical series

RELATIONSHIPS



Christian Values in Education - Age: Senior (13 years+)

RELATIONSHIPS

There are many relationships about which a pamphlet might be written. This pamphlet by and large confines itself to one so abused in our society today, to which young people are so exposed and vulnerable.

PREFACE

There has been a very sad moral decline since the Second World War (1939-1945). We now live in a secular and godless society. Sexual immorality is rampant and unashamedly so. Much as Christian eyes would like to be closed to what is occurring, they cannot completely be so.

Teenagers will certainly be exposed to the dangers of sexual immorality at school, the work place and particularly colleges and university. Consequently it is the duty of Christian parents, Ministers of the Gospel and others, to warn of these dangers.

Biblical principles are either unknown or dismissed as irrelevant in today's society. Wrong conduct is often justified on the pretext that "everyone does it" and that it is "old fashioned" or "Victorian" to try and live in the modern world, without accepting that the moral values have fundamentally changed.

This pamphlet examines the Scriptural principles for sexual conduct, and traces the warnings against sexual immorality. Clearly it is difficult to find suitable phraseology for such a delicate subject. No doubt some may feel the words have become too complex or obscure, in an attempt to preserve decency. Others may feel it is too explicit.

To all of us it is a distasteful subject, but Christian Values in Education commends this pamphlet to parents and teenagers, as a response to many requests to publish on this subject.

May we each be given grace to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Ephesians. 6:13)

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"Two are better than one... and a three fold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9&12)

INTRODUCTION

We live in an age in which the Word of God is openly disregarded. Today's world has removed far from its virtues, but rather claims it is under no obligation to follow the Biblical teaching. This is particularly true with regard to the marriage relationship, which reflects beautifully the relationship between Christ (God's Son) and the Church (those that are Christ's by divine gift. "All that the Father giveth Me...")

The society in which we live sees that there is no sanctity in marriage and considers that it is not necessary. Sexual intercourse and reproduction are no longer joined. The principle force, which produces and binds the relationship between a man and a woman, love, has been degraded into lust. That means that sexual intercourse is not a development of a continuing relationship, but rather may be an act indulged in to gratify the baser instincts without the discipline of love. Contraceptives, therefore, have been introduced to prevent reproduction and abortion is used to eradicate the unwanted. This has changed the concept that children are "an heritage of the Lord". This downgrading of the rightful place of sexual intercourse within marriage has led also to an increase in pornography, in its various forms and the attendant corruption of the mind. With the downturn in moral standards, there has been a significant increase in sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS.

The Bible, however, tells us that God is not mocked (Galatians 6.7) and that "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers (i.e. one who consorts with prostitutes) and adulterers God will judge." (Hebrews 13.4).

In this pamphlet consideration will be given to the Biblical position with regard to the rightful place of sexual intercourse, together with other supporting arguments. Finally, a series of points for consideration is provided for the conduct of couples prior to marriage.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

Many of the social ills of our society have been traced to the breakdown of the family as a social unit. Yet, the sanctity of marriage and the family is one of the foundations of Biblical teaching.

MARRIAGE

"And the Lord God said, it is not good that the man should live alone; I will make him an help meet for him." This shows God's concern for the man He created and His provision. It was not good that man should live alone for various reasons, but to maintain the scope, let us attend to the most important reason.

God meant man for a relationship of love. There is a glorious and perfect relationship of love in the Godhead. "God is love" (1 John 4:16). When God made man in his own image, the spirit of love was to be reflected in His own creation. So he gave man a help meet (suitable and complementary) for him. This was a good foundation for the spirit of love to grow. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." (Ephesians 5:8).

Another aspect reflected in God's created relationship of man and woman, is the mystery of Christ's relationship with His Church. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25). The Lord Jesus came to claim his Church in His great love; was punished for her sins, shed His blood to atone for her and wash away her sins, sanctified her by His spirit of truth, that he might present her (a bride) chaste (pure) unto His Father. By this she should enjoy the fullness of the relationship that was from everlasting. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." (Ephesians 5:31&32).

Love being the ground for the relationship of the man and His wife we move on to observe in Genesis 2:8-25 the account of the creation of Eve, a woman to be a help meet for Adam. These verses need careful reading as they set out the true and proper Biblical relationship between husband and wife.

In Genesis 2:24 the foundations of marriage are to be found. First there is a

"leaving father and mother" in order to set up a new home. Secondly marriage is "cleaving" to the wife by the husband. Cleaving means clinging to, holding dearly to. This illustrates the permanence of marriage and its life-long nature. In the marriage ceremony the words "What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19.6) are used. This, in turn, emphasises further the importance of marriage in the eyes of God the Creator and the seriousness of breaking the marriage bond. Thirdly marriage is "becoming one flesh". This is even closer than cleaving to one another; it is two becoming one. The Lord Jesus Christ reaffirms this in Matthew 19.6 when He says, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh". This "becoming one flesh" refers not only to the sexual union, and hence the rightful place of sexual intercourse, but also to the union of minds that marriage brings between husband and wife.

Within this section, it must be emphasised that marriage partners are male and female. The marriage of those of the same sex is an abomination to God and should be to us. "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is an abomination." (Leviticus 18:12) and "likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lusts toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet." (Romans 1:27).

God's purpose is a marriage union of a man and woman only. The wonderful way in which he has made us enables a sexual union to produce children fulfilling God's command. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." (Genesis 1:27&28. Also read Psalm 127:128). Any means of producing children other than this finds no place in the Bible.

THE UNMARRIED STATE

In the Old Testament, there is great emphasis on the importance of virginity and the terrible consequences of the loss of virginity outside marriage. "And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall endow her to be his wife." (Exodus 22.16). "If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her; Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man,

because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so shalt thou put evil from among you." (Deuteronomy 22.13-29).

Virginity is extolled as the essential state for unmarried women throughout Scripture. In Genesis 24.16 it was one of the attributes of Rebekah that made her suitable to be Isaac's wife, "And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her." In Leviticus 21.v13-14, the priests were only to "take a wife in her virginity". Anna, a prophetess, was a virgin at the time of her marriage (Luke 2. 36). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin espoused to Joseph. (Luke 1.26-35).

EXHORTATIONS AND WARNINGS

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 in Proverbs have some very solemn warnings regarding the lusts of the flesh. Proverbs 6.20-35 speak very forcefully of the power of sexual desire and the terrible consequences of sexual gratification outside marriage. We quote but a verse or two, "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is a light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life; To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. For by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread: and the adulteress will hunt for the precious life." verses 23 – 26. Proverbs 7 speaks similarly concerning the lusts and enticements of the flesh and the chapter concludes with a very serious warning concerning hell and death. "Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth. Let not thine heart decline to her ways, go not astray in her paths. For she hath cast down many wounded: yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Verses 24 – 27.

The Apostle Paul warns Christians to "flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6.18) and to "flee also youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2.22). Joseph was given strength to withstand and flee from the advances of Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39). In contrast, note must be taken of King David, who in a unguarded moment fell into adultery and subsequently was party to murder as a result of his lust (2 Samuel 11). In addition, what trouble came upon his household by the hand of God on account of his sin and how his behaviour grieved him for the remainder of his days! David confessed his sin and Psalm 51 beautifully describes in David's own words his repentance. "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right

spirit with in me." (verse 12)

In Scripture two words are used to describe illicit sexual acts outside marriage. These are fornication and adultery. (Matthew 5.27-32; Mark 7.20-23; Romans 1.26-32; 1 Corinthians 5.1-10; Galatians 5.16-21). Fornication is defined as "voluntary sexual intercourse outside marriage" and adultery is defined as "voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and by other than his/her spouse". The question may arise of why are sexual acts outside marriage so wrong when it is accepted today by society? The reason is simple, because in the eyes of Almighty God it is sinful! Sin is a word that is little used today. Sin is that which separates man from God and the Bible teaches that God hates sin. Solemnly, we live in a society does not accept God in His holiness and that rejects the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6.15-20 describes the serious consequences of fornication stating "What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two saith he, shall be one flesh." This is sinful, because it violates the true meaning of being joined in one body, which is the marriage union. Those who live as partners unmarried, forge a sinful union. It is sinning against one's own body. "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Unmarried persons engaging in a life-uniting act outside the life-long commitment of marriage is wrong.

OTHER ARGUMENTS

There are also many strong moral and social arguments for refraining from sexual intercourse outside of marriage, which further illustrate the wisdom of God as set out in the Bible.

There is evidence to suggest that there is a correlation between pre-marital chastity and a successful marriage. A report in America stated that "Marriages that are preceded by living together have 50 percent higher disruption (divorce or separation) rates than marriages without pre-marital cohabitation." Marriage is for a lifetime, "as long as ye both shall live." And let it be remembered, "what God hath joined together let not man put asunder." Many of those who have acted unscripturally before marriage have found that their marriage state has suffered psychologically and physically. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

Sexually Transmitted Diseases are on the increase. Those who 'sleep around' with different partners are exposing themselves to dangers that could lead to the early death of themselves or others. How solemn this is when we also consider that the Bible teaches (Romans 2.2, Hebrews 9.27) that death, judgement and eternity is the lot of all mankind, those for whom Jesus Christ died will be found in Heaven, those outside of Christ will face an eternal damnation in Hell.

The strength of any relationship is trust. If a person has been promiscuous (i.e. not restricted to one sexual partner) before marriage will they be faithful afterwards? Unless there is full forgiveness and repentance, how will such relationships develop? Also, where someone has led a promiscuous life and finds a companion that they really love, then feelings of guilt may be experienced because they have not kept chaste (i.e. abstained from unlawful or immoral sexual intercourse).

POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

The following points for consideration are intended to help young people in developing healthy relationships. This is done against a backdrop of a society that both ideologically and commercially would exploit and cheapen that which is intended for marriage only.

1. Remember that God sees all things. Mankind is commanded by God in Exodus 20:12 "Honour thy father and mother," v14 "Thou shalt not commit adultery..." and v 17 "Thou shalt not covet."
2. Pray for guidance and wisdom in seeking a husband or wife. "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord." (Proverbs 18:22). Avoid entering into short-term flirtatious relationships. These will not only develop a bad name for you, but also cause emotional pain and strain. "A prudent wife is from the Lord." No relationship should be entered into lightly for this is putting oneself in the way of temptation, but every relationship should be entered into seriously intending that it become established. It is important the couples are similarly minded, for Scripture declares "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3 .3).
3. When you first start to go out with or court someone then first pray, "lead us not into temptation." The temptation to get wrongly involved is very strong. As your relationship develops and deepens agree how you will behave towards each other remembering, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Otherwise you may cause each other regret that will play upon your conscience in later life. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, and pass away. For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." (Proverbs 4:14-16). Spending time together in order to ascertain your suitability for each other and for your relationship to develop needs to be expediently entered into. It is not wise, for example, to be alone together in a house overnight or to spend a holiday alone together when temptation may be more difficult to resist. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust is conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James 1:14&15). Where there is respect in a relationship couples will be careful not to

compromise each other. Writing to or telephoning one another is a commendable way of getting to know one another.

The comment has been made that the Bible states in Ecclesiastes 3.5 that there "a time to embrace, and a to refrain from embracing". How well this illustrates the importance of the right time and place for embracing. It has been said that "Real strength is not trying to see how close you can come to temptation without yielding, it is avoiding the temptation altogether." How prayer is needed by couples to be kept by the power of God from any temptation or compromise.

4. Dress modestly, at all times, so as not to be a temptation to each other. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28)
5. Refrain from looking at or watching images that conjure up sexual or lustful thoughts in the mind. These can be harmful as they can lead to wanting to go further or emulating what has been seen.
6. Likewise, refrain from listening to songs or music that particularly romanticise the physical aspects of relationships.
7. Similarly, desist from indulging in alcohol, drugs or other stimulants as these muddle the mind, deaden the conscience and cause people to act in a way that may be regretted later. "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." (Romans 13:13&14).
8. Be careful that both your public and private behaviour with each other does not become a snare to others. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." (Hebrews 13:4) Remember, your actions and behaviour are a witness of what you profess to believe.
9. Finally have the courage to say "No". Always remember sexual intercourse is a God given gift for marriage only (Hebrews 13. 4). Avoid anyone who would try to persuade you otherwise.

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Relationships - Pamphlet no. 11 -
October 2001