

THE BIBLE AND “HEALTHY” PRE-MARITAL SEX

Is it really all that wrong for a couple who are not married, but who are deeply committed to each other to be “sexually active”? In fact, is it wrong at all? Does the Bible actually address this question?

Anyone who reads the Bible will discover quickly that extra-marital sex or sexual promiscuity is disapproved of in the sternest terms. Genesis 39:9; Exodus 20:14,17; Proverbs 5; 6:23-35; 7:1-22; Matthew 5:27,28; I Corinthians 6:18; I Thessalonians 4:3-8.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of Bible references. God assures us that His will in this matter is not to restrict our pleasure but for our highest good; Deuteronomy 6:24; 10:12,13. To disregard the clearly revealed will of God in this matter is to invite heartache, treachery and destruction to be our intimate companions.

But, what about a couple who care deeply about each other, are strongly committed to their relationship and will probably get married anyway? Is it wrong for them? Isn't this “healthy” pre-marital sex?

For those who have learned to love God, His perspective matters. Does He give approval to such a relationship?

Consider the following Biblical lines of reasoning:

1. Sexual intimacy is consistently described with approval after a couple enters a covenant of commitment, i.e. marriage.
 - a) ...shall leave...become one flesh Genesis 2:24
 - b) ...and Rebekah his wife conceived Genesis 25:21
 - c) Jacob and Leah as well as Jacob & Rachel Genesis 29:21-30
 - d) Moses and Zipporah Exodus 2:21-22
 - e) ...rejoice in the wife of your youth Proverbs 5:15-19
 - f) ..the two shall be one flesh Matthew 19:4-6
 - g) ...the husband fulfill his duty to his wife... I Corinthians. 7:1-5
 - h) ...let the marriage bed be pure Hebrews 13:4

Notice that there is no disapproval in these passages as in the cases of extra-marital sex or with promiscuity. God is after all, the inventor of sex; He does not disapprove of it, but He guards this gift carefully for our good.

2. Virginity prior to marriage is viewed not as one option, but clearly the will of God.
 - a) Among God's people the Israelites:
 - I. Virginity was a matter of character to be expected. Deuteronomy 22:13-21
 - II. A virgin was to protect her virginity by resisting rape. Deuteronomy 22:23-27
 - III. A virgin who had sex with a man who later married her, was non-the-less considered to have been violated. Deuteronomy 22:28,29
 - IV. In David's day, his virgin daughters dressed in a distinct manner. II Samuel 13:18
 - V. Priests, those who represented the people before God, were not permitted to marry anyone except a virgin. Leviticus 21:14

VI. The miracle surrounding Jesus' birth was that a virgin conceived! Matthew 1:23-25; Luke 1:34,37. This upright, engaged young woman knew there was no mistaking the cause of her pregnancy!

b) This question is addressed with equal clarity by Paul for the benefit of the church. He was being questioned

about the appropriate way for single people to handle sexual desire. Among other things he taught:

- ◇ That remaining single and celibate was a noble option even preferable in those dangerous violent days. I Corinthians 7:1,7,8,26,28-31
- ◇ That if sexual desire and lack of self-control made the single life option too difficult, then let them marry and "fulfill their duty". I Corinthians 7:2-5,9,28.

Clearly, the instruction is that the commitment of marriage is what makes the difference between approval and disapproval of sexual activity.

3. But what is marriage?

Are two people married because:

- ◇ they love each other?
- ◇ they are committed to a permanent relationship?
- ◇ they have had sex?
- ◇ they live together?
- ◇ they have a duly signed marriage certificate?

Marriage is a voluntary commitment between a man and a woman to be each others' loving partners for life. This agreement or covenant is made in the presence of God, who sets His seal of permanence on their acts. (Malachi 2:14; Proverbs 2:17, covalent concept). It is this covenant which establishes a marriage.

Marriage ceremonies are not described in the Bible; however, special clothing, feasts, celebrations, gifts and friends are regularly associated with Biblical weddings. Marriage is not viewed as being strictly a private affair between two people. A wedding ought to be conducted in such a manner so as to be seen as fitting and binding within the society in which it takes place. In our country licenses, vows, witnesses and people designated to perform marriages are required. Following such a wedding it is understood by all that this couple are committing themselves to one another permanently. This recognized commitment thereafter reshapes the way other members of the society relate to that couple.

As Christians, it is our desire not merely to meet the requirements of the government for marriage; but to see to it that our weddings reflect the loftiness of Biblical marriage which is illustrated by the relationship of Christ to His church. A Christian couple should seek to fulfill all that God has for them as a team who are in His service.

Together they can do and be something that neither could accomplish or be, alone.

Within the safety and intimacy of this covenant relationship the sexual aspect of marriage is seen **as good by God**. It is to meet the need for deep intimacy on the part of the couple. Within this

same sanctuary of trust, children are to be reared, bring joy to the parents and glory to God as they also learn to walk with Him.

Is pre-marital sex all that wrong?

Clearly it is not the will of God.

Those who seek to please Him will wait for His best and for their good.

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