

Lesson 1- The Value of Trouble

Trouble! What a word! No one likes it, yet all of us face it at throughout our lives. The subject of trouble is not a popular topic to consider, but it is one of the most important principles of the kingdom of God. Some give the impression that trouble is always from the devil and that when a person comes to Jesus all of his troubles are washed away. Others imply that it is when you become a Christian that your real troubles begin. Still others suggest that if you get really close to God through prayer and other spiritual disciplines you can avoid trouble altogether. Are any of these actually true?

Trouble is a part of life!

I have heard it said that life, as a Christian, is hard. The real truth is that life is hard whether you are a Christian or not, and throughout our lives everyone has days of darkness and trouble.

This is what Job said on the subject:

...But man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.

Job 5:7

The wise man Solomon said it this way:

...So if a person lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember that the days of darkness will be many. All that comes is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 11:8

Trouble often comes through people!

It seems to me that much of our trouble comes through our dealings with other people. As children we fight with our siblings and argue with classmates. A best friend betrays a confidence, or a bully causes embarrassment. Parents, teachers and eventually bosses and workmates misunderstand us. What about problems with dating and the opposite sex? Volumes have been written about the difficulties of marriage and the pitfalls of divorce. It is a fact that throughout your life you will regularly come into conflict with people. What are some of the ways in which you find yourself in conflict with people?



Trouble comes through church!

Are we really to expect that at some point there may be misunderstandings and problems in our fellowship? If it is true that trouble comes through people and that people are what make up the church, then we can expect that sooner or later there will be problems in church to overcome. Even in the early church there were problems. Here are a few things that they had to deal with:

- Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit - Acts 5:1,2
- A group called the "Hellenist" complained - Acts 6:1
- The disciples were afraid to accept the newly converted Saul - Acts 9:26
- Some of the "circumcision" group did not want to accept the newly converted Gentiles
- There was a big argument with the men from Judea over the issue of circumcision - Acts 15: 1,2
- There was a sharp disagreement between Paul and Barnabus - Acts 15: 36-40
- Paul lost his temper and reviled a ruler of the people - Acts 23:1-3
- In his letters to the churches, Paul had to correct a number of problems including divisions, immorality, prejudice, incest, marital issues, etc.

Jesus offers hope

Even Jesus told his disciples that they would face trouble, but he added something to bring them great encouragement:

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

John 16:33

Because Jesus came to the world and overcame all of its temptations and troubles, we, through the power of the Spirit, can also overcome the troubles of this world.

Conclusion

As you begin to mature as a Christian you must expect that there will be troubles to overcome. Don't be surprised if some of the problems that crop up involve people in the church since both Jesus and the early Christians had problems between one another. However, you can be encouraged by the fact that through Jesus you can overcome all troubles.

Lesson 2 - The Value of Trouble (part 2)

Have a go at this experiment: close your eyes for a moment and see if you can picture in your mind one of the best memories that you ever had. Take your time until you have a real good one. Now, open your eyes. Can you recall any great lesson that you learned from that experience? Now close your eyes one more time, but this time picture in your mind one of the worst experiences that you ever had. Open your eyes again. Do you remember any lessons learned from the trouble you went through? If you are like most people, you will have learned far more from the bad experience than from the good.



Trouble can be good!

As much as we hate trouble, the bible tells us that we can rejoice when trouble comes because it can, if we allow it, produce something good in us. God allows trouble, often with people, to shape our character and to bring us to maturity.

James says it this way:

My brothers, count it all joy when you fall into different kinds of temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have its perfect work, so that you may be perfect and entire, lacking nothing.

James 1: 2-4

There are many of examples of people in the bible who were shaped by the difficulties that they faced. How many can you think of?

Trouble produces patience!

Have you ever prayed, "God, give me patience"? If you pray that way, don't be surprised if soon after you come into some kind of difficulty, because the bible teaches that patience comes through the trying of your faith.

Consider this passage in Romans:

And not only this, but we glory in afflictions also, knowing that afflictions work out patience, and patience works out experience, and experience works out hope. And hope does not make us ashamed, because the love of

God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

Whenever you see solid, mature Christians who handle matters with patience, you can be sure that they have been through their share of difficulties. They have learned to rest in God and let Him deal with their problems instead of taking matters into their own hands.

God is closer when trouble comes!

Sometimes when you are going through difficult times you may feel that God is non-existent or that He no longer loves you. Actually the opposite is true. It is often when you are at your lowest point that God is *closest* to you!

Hear what David wrote:

When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.

Psalms 34:17-19

God uses trouble to discipline those he loves!

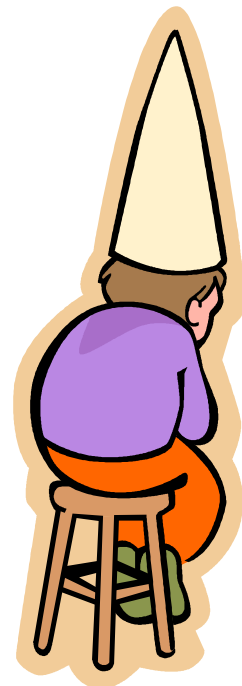
Here's one thing that is very important to remember: God loves us too much to leave us the way we are. He uses trouble to discipline us and develop our character.

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Hebrews 12:5, 6

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:11



Conclusion

Don't be surprised when trouble comes, particularly when it involves someone close to you or someone in church. Remember that trouble can be good! It will develop patience in you and strengthen your character. God is close to you during your times of trial and is often disciplining you because he loves you.

Lesson 3 - How Do I Get On With People?

People are the most amazing and most significant of God's creation. We were made in God's image and were given dominion over the earth. At the same time, people can be very, very difficult! Throughout our lives the most challenging problems that we will continue to face will almost always involve people. Yet the bible teaches us to do our utmost to get on with people. Here are a couple of examples:



Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:17, 18

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14

Q - Does this seem impossible? Have you tried to get on with family, workmates, and even friends without success?

In this first lesson we will look at what the bible says about getting on with all people, and in the next lesson we will look specifically at getting on with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

How can I get on with people?

By Loving People! The most significant characteristic of the children of God is that they love one another. This is what Jesus said about it:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34, 35 (ESV)

Q - Do you sometimes find it difficult to love people in church? If so, why, and what can be done about it?

- a. We are also commanded to love our neighbour:
The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your

neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:9, 10 (ESV)

- b. We are even told to love our enemies!

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5: 43-48 (ESV)

Q - how can I love my enemies when I don't really like them? And doesn't the bible say something about hating those who hate Him with perfect hatred? (see psalm 139:19-22).

Conclusion

Jesus said that the greatest commandment is love. When we begin to allow the love of God to flow through us, we are then on the way to getting along with people. In our next lesson we will look at getting along with in the body of Christ.

Lesson 4 - How Do I Get On With People? (Part 2)

In our last lesson we considered God's commandments to love all men and to, as much as possible, live at peace with all men. Love is the greatest commandment! In this lesson we want to focus on relationships within the body of Christ.

It is very easy to talk about love these days, but to love someone and to get on with someone can be quite different. I heard of a man who said about his wife: "I love her, but I can't live with her!" Often in church there are many lonely people who never actually get close to anyone. There is also something else to consider: the closer you get to a person, the more likely you are to come into conflicts and difficulties. The bible teaches us the importance of fellowship and personal relationships. Therefore we must be committed to getting on with people. But how? How do we get on with people?

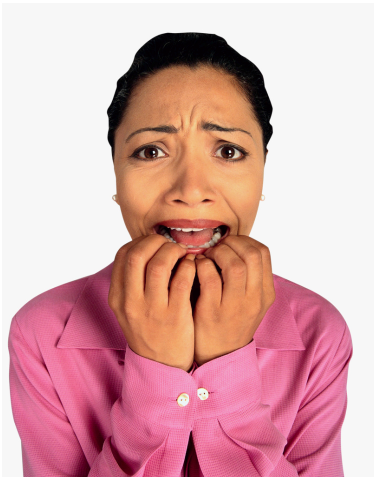
By Getting Involved! You must be prepared to take the risk of really sharing your life with others. Here are 5 ways to really get involved with people:

- **Be available** - you will never get on with people if you don't put yourself out to get to know people. There is a biblical principle, which states that you reap what you sow (Galatians 6: 7, 8). In another place it says:

If you give to others, you will be given a full amount in return. It will be packed down, shaken together, and spilling over into your lap. The way you treat others is the way you will be treated.

Luke 6:38 (CEV)

- i If you don't put make yourself available to others, you may just find yourself alone. Also, the more we are together with each other, the better we get to know each other (Hebrews 10:24, 25).



- **Be real** - in other words, not superficial or fake. It is what happens when people begin to really share who they are and what is really happening to them. They share hurts, feelings, sometimes share failures, doubts and fears, and are able to acknowledge their weaknesses and even ask for help (2 Corinthians 6:11).
- **Be safe** - when one has a good friend, there is a feeling that anything can be shared without the fear that secrets may be repeated.

A gossip tells everything, but a true friend will keep a secret.

Proverbs 11:13 (CEV)

- **Be humble** - Sometimes our own agenda blinds us from seeing people the way God sees them. This is usually a form of pride. Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."

1 Peter 5:5-7 (NKJV)

- **Be honest** - We must care enough for each other to lovingly speak truth instead of ignoring problems or issues. Sometimes avoiding conflict makes matters worse. Also, the way we speak the truth is just as important as what we say!

Therefore, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man does not work out the righteousness of God.

James 1:19, 20 (MKJV)

But if your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

Matthew 18:15 (MKJV)

Conclusion

If you are going to get on with people you will definitely need to get involved with people in a real and practical way. In our next lesson we will look at having the right attitude.

Lesson 5 - How Do I Get On With People? (Part 3)

So far, we have seen that in order to get on with people we must have genuine love for people, which means that we must also get involved with people in a real and practical way. What else do we need to get on with people?

Have The Right Attitude! Here are three final things that you must have if you are serious about building strong relationships:

1. You must have a ***mind-set of reconciliation***. You must have a heart for unity. Jesus had a heart for unity:

"And I do not pray for these alone, but for those also who shall believe on Me through their word, that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. And I have given them the glory which You have given Me, that they may be one, even as We are one, I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them as You have loved Me."



John 17:20-23 (MKJV)

2. You must ***pursue the things of peace***.

"So then let us pursue the things of peace, and the things for building up one another."

Romans 14:19 (MKJV)

- i. One way of doing this is to concentrate on what we have in common instead of our differences. For example, our "International Day" is a *celebration* of our cultural diversity rather than highlighting our cultural differences.
3. You must have ***realistic expectations*** about the people in your fellowship. Sometimes our idea of what we think the church should be does not line up with the fact that we are imperfect people. When mistakes are made and misunderstanding comes, we become disappointed and are ready to give up. Instead we should patiently bear with one another in love.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and

gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV)

Conclusion

To get on with people in a church requires a commitment to true fellowship. This means that we must make a real effort to get involved with our brethren and includes openness and honesty. We must also have a right attitude toward one another with realistic expectations.

Lesson 6 - What Do I Do When Relationships Break?

If it is true that relationships are extremely valuable, then they are worth fixing when broken. It seems that the minute that something goes wrong, we are very quick to give up on people. Couples quickly get divorced. Friends soon are not speaking to one another. Parents stop speaking to their adult children for years. Neighbours become enemies. It seems to me that this is the aim of our enemy and not of God. If we are designed to be in relationships, then it makes sense that we will not function well if most of our relationships are broken down.

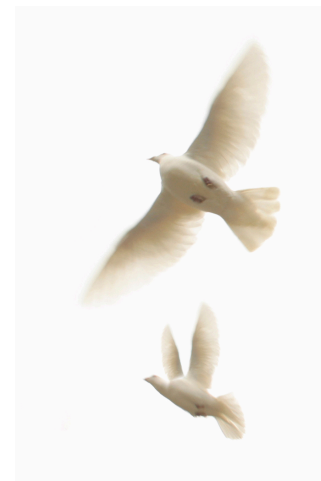


In order to restore broken fellowship, we must learn to be peacemakers!

- * *Blessed are the peacemakers! For they shall be called the sons of God.*
Matthew 5: 9 (NKJV)
- * *James 3:13 - Who is wise and knowing among you? Let him show his works by his good conduct with meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and strife in your hearts, do not glory and lie against the truth. This is not the wisdom coming down from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife are, there is confusion and every foul deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first truly pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

1) What is a peacemaker?

- a) A peacemaker is not just a peaceable person - being an easy-going person does not make you a peacemaker.
- b) A peacemaker is not just a peace lover - everyone loves and desires peace. A famous line for beauty pageant finalists is "I wish for world peace!"
- c) Peacemaking is not avoiding conflict - when we pretend that problems do not exist, run from them, or are afraid to talk about them, we are not making peace.
- d) Peacemaking is not appeasement - just giving in or backing down is not the way. We are not doormats!



2) How do we become peacemakers?

- a) Speak to God before you speak to anyone else (including yourself!) - Psalm 37:1-8; Psalm 55:22; Psalm 32:8,9
- i) This means being honest with God, telling him your frustrations, feelings, sins and wrongdoings; He knows the truth anyway.
 - ii) God can change your or the other person *without your help!*

b) Don't procrastinate!

- i) *Matthew 5:21 "You're familiar with the command to the ancients, 'Do not murder.' I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother 'idiot!' and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill. This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God. Or say you're out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don't lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him. After all, if you leave the first move to him, knowing his track record, you're likely to end up in court, maybe even jail. If that happens, you won't get out without a stiff fine."*



The Message

c) Listen carefully before you attempt to solve the problem.

- i) *Therefore, my beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. For the wrath of man does not work out the righteousness of God.*

James 1:19 (NKJV)

d) Accept responsibility for your part of the problem

- i) *And why do you look on the splinter that is in your brother's eye, but do not consider the beam that is in your own eye? Or how will you say to your brother, Let me pull the splinter out of your eye; and, behold, a beam is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First cast the beam out of your*

own eye, and then you shall see clearly to cast the splinter out of your brother's eye.

Matthew 7:3-5 (NKJV)

e) Deal with the problem, not the person

i) *A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.*

Proverbs 15:1

- Angry words will never fix the problem
- How you say something is just as important as what you say
- Some things should never be said
- Nagging doesn't help

f) Keep your end of the bargain

i) *If it is possible, as far as is in you, being in peace with all men. Not avenging yourselves, beloved, but giving place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him. If he thirsts, give him drink. For in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:18-20

g) Focus on reconciliation, not resolution

i) *"...Whereas God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and putting the word of reconciliation in us."*

2 Corinthians 5:18

Conclusion

Getting relationships right are worth the effort. If you know that you have a problem with someone who should be close to you, put these points into practice. First, talk to God about the situation and ask Him what you should do. Then follow these suggestions and do your best to end the problem.

Lesson 7 - Sex: Why the Hassle?

Why is sex such an issue? It seems that everyone has something to say about the subject. There are so many opinions from every direction. For example, you cannot escape sex on television, movies, and newspapers or even on the radio! Sex is one of the biggest subjects discussed on talk shows and reality programmes. It is hinted at with subtlety in our children's cartoons and one of the main features of novels. There are "experts" from every perspective imagined and you can have sex counselors, therapists and even teachers!



The bible has a lot to say about it as well, but surprisingly it seems that the subject has not been explored much in churches until recently. Why? I think it is because in some churches and Christian communities sex has become a dirty word. Yet it is really important to get God's true perspective on this important subject. In this lesson I want to consider 4 reasons why it is important to know the truth about sex.

Reason #1 - Intimacy

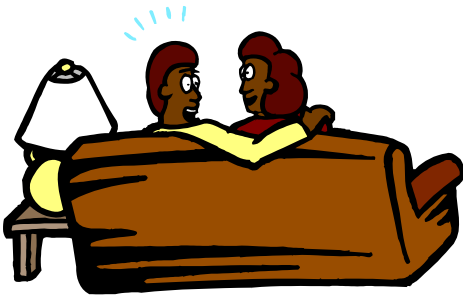
The word intimate means to make known. In relationships, this word implies extreme closeness and fellowship. Intimacy is one of the fundamental needs of every individual, and sex is one of the chief expressions of intimacy. Therefore your sexual relationships are extremely important. Getting it right can be extremely satisfying, but getting it wrong will certainly be devastating! It is no wonder that there is such a battle in this area.

Drink waters out of your own cistern, and running waters out of your own well. Should your overflowing spring be scattered abroad as rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only your own, and not strangers' with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. Like the loving deer and pleasant doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times, and be ravished always with her love. And why will you, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger?

Proverbs 5: 15-20

Reason #2 - Guilt

When sexual relationships are inappropriate, they cause tremendous guilt that can affect a person for many years to come. I once met a man who had sex with a woman became pregnant. Being afraid of responsibility, he left her and met another woman. When the same thing happened to the second woman, he left



her and then went back to the first woman who by that time had already had the baby. When he spoke to me he was in a state of confusion because he had feelings for both women, yet he did not want to leave or commit to either of them. He was riddled with guilt!

Guilt and condemnation go hand in hand. When a person feels guilty, he or she feels condemned. If I'm guilty, then I'm not good enough to pray, read the bible, go to church, etc. If I'm guilty, then I might as well continue doing what I'm doing since a little more won't really make a difference. Guilt can affect you before you're married and after marriage.

Reason # 3 - Decision Making

Sexual sin will almost certainly affect your decisions in relationships. Whenever there is guilt, condemnation or sin, your decisions will be distorted. With the situation that I described earlier, the man could not determine the true nature of his feelings because they were distorted by sex. I told him that he did not know whether he actually loved either of the girls or simply loved having sex with them. He replied by saying that I was absolutely right. If you want to be sure that you genuinely love someone, don't have sex with that person! Here what the wise man Solomon wrote about decision-making:

*Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore **remove sorrow** from your heart, **And put away evil from your flesh**, For childhood and youth are vanity.*

Ecclesiastes 10:9, 10

The sorrow here refers to anything that causes trouble of the mind, and the evil refers to sin. When these are put away, then right decisions are easier to make.

Reason #4 - Health

Most of us are aware that casual sex can lead to a multitude of **physical** problems through sexually transmitted diseases. However many are unaware of the **emotional** difficulties surrounding inappropriate sex. We considered an example earlier of how casual sex can affect the decision-making of a single person, but it can also have an ongoing affect on you as a married person. Some have *memories* of previous relationships that they cannot forget. Others become *afraid* that they may be punished because of a past sexual sin, or that their children may repeat what they have done. Trust may be strained, because if your spouse could not control their sexual desires before marriage, what will

prevent them from sinning now? Inappropriate sex also can affect your **spiritual** development for similar reasons.

Remove your ways far from her, and do not come near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the cruel; that strangers not be filled with your strength, and your labors be in the house of a stranger; and you moan when your end comes, when your flesh and muscle are eaten away, and say, How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised correction; and I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor bowed down my ears to those who taught me!



Proverbs 5: 8-13

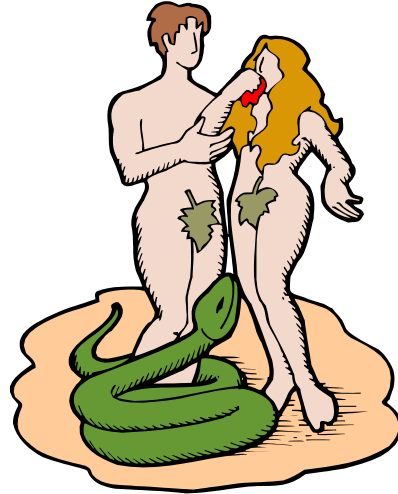
Conclusion

I have highlighted 4 reasons why it is important to know the truth about sex. In our next lesson we will consider how sex was intended to be.

Lesson 8 - Sex: How Is It Intended To Be?

In our last lesson we consider four reasons why it is important to know the truth about sex. So what *is* the truth about sex? Here are a few questions for you to consider as a group.

- Some think that sex is sinful. Many religious groups put restrictions on marriage, which seems to add to the idea that sex is somehow impure. *Is sex a bad thing?*
- When Adam sinned, the bible says that they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves in order to hide their nakedness. *Is the human body sinful?*



You may have found the answers to these questions obvious, but it is very important to establish the truth about sex. Here are four important truths about sex:

- 1 **God created sex!** In fact, when you think about it, sex is one of God's most amazing and wonderful inventions. He could have made us like some animals that avoid each other most of the year until they come in "season". He could have made sex a necessary thing that we perform for propagation with no emotion, intimacy or pleasure involved. Instead, He made the act of sexual intercourse a pleasurable experience that encourages intimacy.
- 2 **Sex is not sinful!** In fact, this is what the bible says about Adam and Eve before the fall:

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.
Genesis 2:25

If you understand that God created it, then it also makes sense that it could not be sinful in itself. This may seem obvious, but many people have problems in their married life because they think this. Often the reason why people feel this way is because sex is almost always portrayed in a bad way. In television, cinema, and other forms of media, it is almost always improper sexual behaviour that is publicized, encouraged and glamorised.

- 3 **Sex was created for marriage!** By it married couples experience pleasure and intimacy and through it come the blessing of children.

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Hebrews 13:4

Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Psalms 127: 3

- 4 **Sex is not everything!** Some give the impression that if you are not having sex, you have missed your purpose in life. This is not true! Many people live completely fulfilled lives without ever having sex. If you think that fulfilling sexual desire is the ultimate experience in life, you are in error.
- Joseph was a very handsome and desirable man, yet as a young man he rejected the sexual advances of his master's wife. He later became second ruler of all of Egypt.
 - Daniel was a eunuch in the Babylonian king's court, handsome, smart and single. He became one of the chief rulers of all of Babylon.
 - Jesus, the greatest example of a man who fulfilled his purpose in life, was single and never had sex in his life!

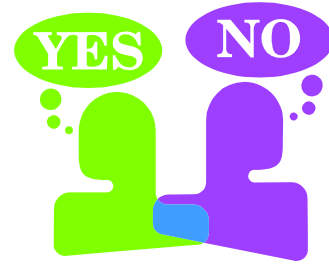
Conclusion

It is important to have a right understanding of what God intended when he created sex. He designed it to be experience between a man and woman who have committed themselves to each other through marriage. We will look closer at marriage in a later lesson. However, it is important to note that sex is not the "be all and end all". Personal fulfillment will never be achieved through sex.

In our next lesson we will consider when sex is wrong and why.

Lesson 9 - When Is Sex Wrong?

There are many examples in the world of things that can be good or bad, depending on how you deal with them. Fire can cook your food or burn your house down. A car can get you to church or run you over. A knife is an essential tool in both the kitchen and in combat, but both serve different purposes. In each of these examples, the critical issue is how each item is used. Sex is the same. We considered in our last lesson that sex was created by God and is not sinful, but was intended to be experienced in marriage. However, the misuse of sex will lead to many problems



Here is a list of sexual practices that are forbidden in the scriptures. Have a different person look at each verse, and then discuss why you think that God forbids each action.

1. Sex with someone else's spouse (*adultery*) Exodus 20:14; Luke 18:20
2. Sex before marriage (*fornication*) Deuteronomy 22:28; Galatians 5: 19
3. Sex with the same sex (*homosexuality*) Leviticus 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Romans 1:26,27
4. Sex of the mind (Pornography) Matthew 5:27-30; Proverbs 6:25,26; Matthew 15:18-20
5. Sex with blood relatives (*incest*) Leviticus 18; 1 Corinthians 5:1
6. Sex for money or favours (*prostitution*) Leviticus 19:29; 1 Corinthians 6:15
7. Sex by force (*rape*) Deuteronomy 22:25
8. Sex with animals (*bestiality*) Leviticus 20:15, 16

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness they received Gods laws and precepts. In Leviticus 18 He made a very important statement about the sexual practices of the people around them. Here is what He said:

*"You shall not **do as they do** in the land of Egypt, **where you lived**, and you shall not **do as they do** in the land of Canaan, **to which I am bringing you**. You shall not walk in their statutes."*

Leviticus 18:3

But you shall keep my statutes and my rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. So keep

my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God."

Leviticus 18:26-30

Here are some of the problems mentioned in the bible that are caused as a result of sexual sins:



Sexual sin -

- Destroys the sanctity of marriage and the family - Hebrews 13:4
- Reduces vitality and leads to sexual disease - 1 Corinthians 6:18; Proverbs 5:7-11
- Causes emotional confusion - 1 Peter 2:11
- Ruins your reputation - Ecclesiastes 7:1; 2 Samuel 12:14
- Causes fellowship between believers to be broken - 1 Corinthians 5:9-13
- Hinders your ability to serve God - 2 Timothy 2:19-22

Probably the most important consequence of sexual sin is that fact that without repentance, they will exclude you from the kingdom of God.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Conclusion

Thank God that we can be washed, sanctified (set apart) and justified (made right) through Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God! If you confess your sin to God and repent (changing your mind and actions) God promises that He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We can be set free from the bondages that come through sexual sins.

Lesson 10 - Homosexuality & Prostitution

Due to much confusion that has come mainly through the media, I think that we should consider these two subjects a bit more carefully. For clarity's sake, we define homosexuality as having intercourse with the same sex. We will begin with this question: is homosexuality normal? Are people born as homosexuals? Take a moment or two to consider this in your group before we continue.

What does the bible say about homosexuality?

1. It is not normal behavior, but called sin and a perversion

- a. Webster's dictionary states that the word pervert means: To turn from truth, propriety, or from its proper purpose; to distort from its true use or end; as, to pervert reason by misdirecting it; to pervert the laws by misinterpreting and misapplying them; to pervert justice; to pervert the meaning of an author; to pervert nature; to pervert truth. This is what Paul wrote to the Roman believers concerning homosexuality:



- i. *Because of this, God gave them up to dishonourable passions, for even their females changed the natural use to that contrary to nature. And likewise, the males also forsaking the natural use of the female burned in their lust toward one another, males with males working out shamefulness, and receiving back within themselves the reward which was fitting for their error.*

Romans 1:26, 27 LITV

2. It is clearly forbidden in scripture.

- a. One of the more memorable moments in the bible was when God judged the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, found in Genesis 19. It was from their perverted sexual activity that we get the term "Sodomy". Such acts are clearly condemned in scripture:

- i. *"...who knowing the righteous order of God, that those practicing such things are worthy of death, not only do them, but also approve those practicing them.*

Romans 1:32

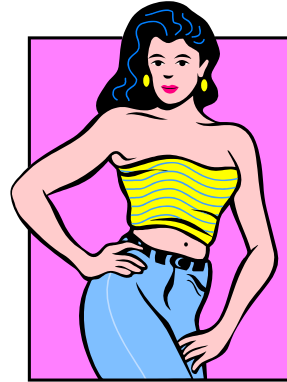
Now let's consider the question of prostitution. Some say that it is the oldest profession in the world (actually tilling the ground is the oldest profession in the world). But just because something has been done for a long time does not make it right! Many today argue that prostitution should be legalized and claim that it works well in places like Amsterdam in Holland. Should prostitution be made legal? Take a moment to discuss this in your group.

What does God's word say about prostitution?

1. **It is forbidden in scripture.** Notice the end of this passage:

- a. Do not prostitute thy daughter, to cause her to be a whore; lest the land fall to whoredom, and the land become full of wickedness.*

Leviticus 19:29



Paul also referred to it in the New Testament:

- b. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."*

1 Corinthians 6:15, 16

2. **Prostitution brings moral and social decay to whole communities.**

- a. Solomon, the great and wise king of Israel, spoke of four types of woman in the same lines. The evil (immoral) woman, seductress, Harlot and adulteress are all mentioned in this passage:*

- i. "...To keep you from the **evil woman**, from the flattering tongue of a **seductress**. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a **harlot** a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an **adulteress** will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent..."*

ii. Proverbs 6:24-29

- b. He says something very similar again about the immoral woman, but in this passage he highlights in even greater detail what happens to the man who is foolish enough to become involved with such a woman.

- i. *For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life—her ways are unstable; you do not know them. Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honour to others, and your years to the cruel one; lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labours go to the house of a foreigner; and you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed, and say: "How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me! I was on the verge of total ruin, in the midst of the assembly and congregation."*

Proverbs 5:3-14

Can homosexuals ever change? Can prostitutes be free? In our next lesson we will consider how to control sexual desires.

Lesson 11- How to Control Sexual Desires (Part 1)

It is very easy for either yourself or someone else to point out your faults. However, it is something completely different to work out how to improve. This is never truer than when dealing with sexual desires. Many Christians will tell you what not to do but few can really help with what to do. In a world where sex is thrown in our faces on a regular basis, how can I remain holy? Is it possible to avoid the type of pitfalls that most people seem to welcome and accept? Take a moment to discuss this in your group. How can I control my sexual desires?

1 By Understanding the Consequences

If a boy walks into a sweet shop he may be tempted to grab his favourite chocolate and slip it into his mouth. But if he realised that he was being watched by his parents, he would quickly change his mind. Knowing that he would quickly be caught and suffer the consequences of his sin would change his behaviour. What are the consequences of sexual sin?



a When I sin sexually *I sin against myself!*

Whatever short term gain you may receive from sinful sexual behaviour, don't be deceived, it will eventually hurt you in one way or another!

- i Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.*

1 Corinthians 6:18

b When I sin sexually *I ruin my reputation and sin against others around me!*

There are so many examples of this in the scriptures. Consider what happens to Amnon's reputation and to those around him when he rapes his half sister Tamar:

- i But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." She answered him, "No, my brother, do not violate me, for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this outrageous thing. As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the outrageous fools in Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king, for he will not withhold me from you." But he would not listen to her,*

and being stronger than she, he violated her and lay with her. Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Get up! Go!" But she said to him, "No, my brother, for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her.

2 Samuel 13:11-16

c When I sin sexually, I sin against God!

When Joseph was asked to sleep with his master's wife, this was his reply:

*i But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, because of me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my charge. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness and **sin against God?**"*

Genesis 39:8, 9

d When the prodigal son came to his senses, he confessed that he had sinned against heaven and before his father (Luke 15:18-21). He had sinned against God, before those who loved him and against himself. These are the consequences of sin of any kind.

2 By Bringing Secret Sins to the Light

One of the main problems with sexual sin is the fact that they are almost always done in secret and therefore the consequences are usually hidden. Sexual sins are often quite embarrassing to talk about or confess to. If it seems that no one will ever know about the problem, then it is much easier to allow the problem to grow. Look at just a few passages that speak of the secrets of men:



- *You have set our iniquities before you, our **secret sins** in the light of your presence.*

Psalm 90: 8

- *For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every **secret thing**, whether good or evil.*

Ecclesiastes 12:14

- *For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they **do in secret**.*

Ephesians 5:12

- *For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is **anything secret** that will not be known and come to light.*

Luke 8:17

- *...on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the **secrets of men** by Christ Jesus.*

Romans 2:16

The greatest way to deal with secret sins is to confess them both to God and to a **trusted** friend or spiritual leader. In this way you become accountable and are able to receive grace and help.

- *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

James 5:16 (ESV)

- *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Galatians 6:1, 2 (ESV)

- *Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Hebrews 4:16 (ESV)

Conclusion

When you are fully aware that sexual sin will hurt you and those around you, this is the beginning of victory. Be prepared to share your difficulties with a trusted friend who will give godly advice and will pray for you. We'll look at what else can be done in our next lesson.

Lesson 11- How to Control Sexual Desires (part 2)

With sexual desire comes strong feeling and emotion that many find difficult to control. As we discussed in our last lesson, knowing the consequences of sexual sin and bringing the secret things into the light are the beginnings of overcoming such feelings. But is there more that we can do to overcome in this area? When it comes down to it, is controlling sexual desire the same as controlling any other sin? Take a few moments to consider this question.

Paul told the believers in Rome 3 specific things that they had to do to in order to overcome sin:

1) Change the way you think!

*So you also must **consider yourselves** dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Romans 6:11

- a) When Paul said "consider yourselves" he was telling them to think in a different way. Here is another way of saying the same thing:

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

Romans 12: 2

- b) This is one of the most important passages in the bible when it comes to controlling the mind. How can the mind be renewed? Take a few moments to answer this question.

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **think about these things**.*

Philippians 4: 8

*Let the **word of Christ dwell in you richly**, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

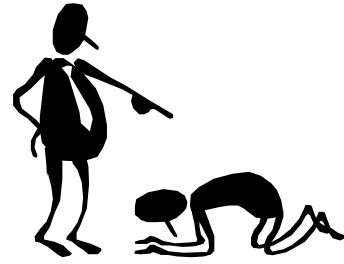
Colossians 3: 16



2) Don't let sexual desires control you!

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions.

Romans 6:12



- a) Don't be deceived. It is not realistic to think that somehow when we become Christians we lose all feelings of sexual attraction, but we must *decide* whether or not these feelings will rule in us. The bible calls this **self-control**. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit:



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 5:22, 23

- b) In the same way that fruit on a tree needs time to grow and mature so does the fruit of the Spirit. As we continually refuse to allow passion to dominate our minds and bodies the fruit of self-control continues to grow.

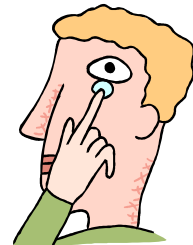
3) Don't yield to unrighteousness!

Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Romans 6:13

- a) This happens when we allow any part of ourselves to be used for unrighteousness. Jesus said it this way:

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.



Matthew 5:29, 30

- b) Is Jesus really suggesting that we cut out our eyes or chop off our right hand? What he really means is that if what we see (with our eyes) causes us to sin, **stop looking at it**. In the same way, if what we do (with our hands) causes us to sin, stop doing it!

Conclusion

To overcome sexual sin we must first be determined to change the way we think. This includes renewing our mind through the power of the Spirit of God and choosing to think on things that build us up and are good. Next, we must not allow sexual desire to be our master, but practice self-control, which comes from the Spirit of God. Finally, we must be determined not to allow our bodies to become the means of which sin is aroused. By practicing these principles we will be well on our way to controlling our sexual desires.

How Much Do You Remember?

- 1) **We can rejoice when trouble comes if we:**
 - a) Ignore it and think on good things.
 - b) Forgive people and forget about it.
 - c) Allow it to shape our character.
- 2) **Trouble is a part of life and comes through:**
 - a) The devil, who has ultimate control over the problems of this world.
 - b) People and sometimes even people in the church!
 - c) Our own sins and nothing else.
- 3) **The first and most important thing that a Christian can do to get on with others is:**
 - a) Have love for others.
 - b) Do works of righteousness for others.
 - c) Forgive others.
- 4) **One way to get involved with people is to "be safe", which means:**
 - a) Being a good friend by not listening to their problems lest you be tempted to gossip.
 - b) Being a good friend by listening to their problems without gossiping.
 - c) Being a good friend by listening to their problems but only talking about the real important issues to others.
- 5) **Another way to get involved with people is to "be honest", which means:**
 - a) Lovingly speak the truth instead of ignoring problems or issues.
 - b) Lovingly speak the truth but ignoring problems that may cause conflict.
 - c) Lovingly speak the truth but only dealing with problems that you are not directly involved with.
- 6) **In order to build strong relationships I must have a mind-set of:**
 - a) Reconciliation
 - b) Remembrance.
 - c) Hostility avoidance.
- 7) **In order to build strong relationships I must pursue:**
 - a) Justice.
 - b) Equity.
 - c) Peace.
- 8) **In order to build strong relationships I must have:**
 - a) High expectations.
 - b) Realistic expectations.
 - c) No expectations.
- 9) **One way to become a peacemaker is to:**
 - a) Get advice from friends and then commit their advice to God.
 - b) Speak to spiritual leaders and then ask God about what they have advised.
 - c) Speak to God before I speak to anyone else.

10) Another way of becoming a peacemaker is to:

- a) Deal with. the person, not the problem
- b) Deal with the problem, not the person.
- c) Deal with God, and the problem will handle itself.

11) One reason why it is important to know the truth about sex is:

- a) Because sex is one of the chief expressions of intimacy
- b) Because sex is an exciting topic to discuss.
- c) Because speaking about sex will gain the interest of young people in the church.

12) Sexual sin can affect your decision making in relationships:

- a) Because in God's eyes, once you have sex you are married to that person.
- b) Because sex will cause your partner to follow you around and eventually trap you.
- c) Because whenever there is guilt, condemnation or sin, your decisions will be distorted.

13) The human body is sinful:

- a) True.
- b) False.

14) Sex was created for marriage only:

- a) True.
- b) False.

15) Some sexual practices are wrong because:

- a) They cause emotional confusion and can ruin your reputation.
- b) They go against public opinion
- c) Too much of a good thing can be dangerous.

16) Without repentance, sexual sin can exclude you from the kingdom of God:

- a) True.
- b) False.

17) Homosexuality is normal behaviour and not forbidden in scripture:

- a) True.
- b) False.

18) Prostitution brings moral and social decay to whole communities

- a) True.
- b) False.

19) The first way to control sexual desires is to:

- a) Have sex as often as possible in order to keep sexual desires fulfilled.
- b) Change the way you think by renewing your mind.
- c) Get married as young as possible.

20) Another way to control sexual desires is to:

- a) Not allow any part of ourselves to be used for unrighteousness.
- b) Never watch TV, read newspapers or listen to the radio.
- c) Avoid the opposite sex as much as possible.