

What the Bible Says About Sex



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Introduction - What the Bible Says About Sex

Twenty articles giving a biblical Christian perspective on topics such as love, singleness, dating, homosexuality, same sex marriages, cloning, forgiveness in marriage, adultery of the heart, infertility, pornography, abortion, sex before marriage, prostitution, sexually transmitted disease, marrying an unbeliever and masturbation. The articles are concise solid bible teaching that I hope will help you find your way through the sexual maze. The approach is simply "what the Scriptures say about X" in a fairly plain fashion. There is a certain lack of illustration or stories and it's pretty much a "just the facts" approach. By the end of each article you should have a clear idea of what the Bible says and what God thinks of that behavior or in that area.

When these articles were on the web they attracted comments ranging from vitriolic abuse (mainly the article on homosexuality) to people saying how much their lives were changed by them. They are very challenging but their power is not in my writing style but in the Word of God that speaks so strongly on sexual issues to this generation.

Love – The Greatest Thing

(1 Corinthians 13 NIV) If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. {2} If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. {3} If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have no love, I gain nothing. {4} Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. {5} It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. {6} Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. {7} It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. {8} Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. {9} For we know in part and we prophesy in part, {10} but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. {11} When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. {12} Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. {13} And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

As Christians, depending on our denomination, we hear the great virtues of faith, prayer, sacrificial devotion to God, prophecy, speaking in tongues, missionary service or charitable works. Our Christian sub-cultures tell us that this or that is "the greatest thing". These things are vastly superior to what the world sees as best - money, sex and power. Yet, while good, they all fall short of what is best and that is love. There is nothing better than being truly loved and nothing that you can do better for someone else than to truly love them.

Denis de Rougemont in his "Love Declared" lists over 30 Greek words that can be translated "love" from the frenzied passion of "mania", to "euonia"- dedicated devotion, to the familial tenderness of "storge". Many of these were unsuitable for use by the Holy Spirit. Two words for love dominate the New Testament - "agape" and "phileo". Agape is the dominant word when it comes to the theology of the NT. So much so that you sometimes hear it said that it is a "special Greek word for love". Agape is not some specially invented word in fact it is the commonly used for love in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture commonly used in NT times). It translated the Hebrew 'hb "to love". It is used 78 times in the Greek Old Testament and mainly means human love such as that in the Song of Solomon. Leon Morris suggests that agape was chosen by the translators of the Septuagint in preference to words such as "eros" which had so many negative connotations for the reader. Agape was thus not a word that denoted anything especially good, it just did not connote anything particularly bad. However, in the New Testament this pale word is invested with deep and powerful meanings.

Love is patient

The first meaning of agape is that of patience. Love is patient. God is patient with sinners. They anger him (Romans 1:18) but He puts up with them, ever hoping that they will change (Romans 2:4 NIV) or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? God is not just patient with good, kind, deserving people. He is patient with the wicked, the contemptible, the proud and the cruel. In my own flash-pan anger I have sometimes wished that God would quickly mete out some sudden justice to someone who had wronged me. What if the martyr Stephen had felt this way? We might never have received the apostle Paul if God had struck him dead then and there. Paul

was very aware of God's great patience with him. (1 Timothy 1:15-16 NIV) Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst. {16} But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. God's love is very patient towards us. The Old Testament describes this patience as erek aphyim that is "long-nosed" "long of face" meaning someone who takes a long while to change their facial expression. It is the opposite of smiles one minute and anger the next. God's love is steady and reliable.

Love is kind

The second great quality of love is that it is kind. The definition of kindness is: chresteuomai, to show oneself useful, i.e. act benevolently: be kind. Love makes itself practical and benevolent. It is never cruel. It does not impose harsh burdens but rather lifts them. Contrast the cruelty of legalism (Luke 11:46 NKJV) And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers." with the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 11:29-30 NKJV) "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. {30} "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." In Jesus we see the kindness of God made manifest. He heals the sick (Matthew 4:23), restores to sanity those afflicted by demons (Matthew 8:17), accepts the outcasts (Luke 19:2-10) and teaches words of eternal life (John 6:68). He is especially kind to those who are broken by the burden of their sins such as the prostitute who wept at His feet.

(Luke 7:37-50 NKJV) And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, {38} and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. {39} Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." {40} And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." {41} "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. {42} "And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" {43} Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." {44} Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. {45} "You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. {46} "You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. {47} "Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little." {48} Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." {49} And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" {50} Then He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Love Serves Graciously

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. How does love serve one's neighbor? The first three sins (envy, boastfulness and pride) revolve around the question "What does my neighbor have that I don't" (or a close variant of this question). Whereas love asks "What does my neighbor need, that I have, so that I may give it to them?". The second three sins (rudeness,

self-seeking and being easily angered) are clustered around the attitude "Get out of my way I am in a hurry to look after number one!" Whereas love says "You are no inconvenience, you are special, you were made in the image of God it is a privilege to love and serve you." The last thing in this verse is "it keeps no record of wrongs". Love shoots the scorekeeper. Love enjoys the game and forgets about the score. Love says "I just enjoy being with you and caring for you. The score in this game doesn't matter at all, my righteousness comes from Jesus - not from being one up on you. I don't want power over you, I don't want you to feel guilty, I just want to be your friend." God loves the Christian like that. The scorekeeper has been sent off the field. God just enjoys our love, our worship and who we are in Him. We need to love each other a bit like that too.

Love Lives Well In a Messy World

{6} Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. {7} It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

The sentimental person has immoral love. They call gangsters cute. They romanticize robbers and glorify pirates. True love does not delight in evil - no matter how romantic or colorful the form it takes. True love is stern stuff. It has a stern love of the truth wedded to a stern love of the person. Agape love is solid. It rings true. When a person loves you with agape love you sense that they will always be there for you. They may be grieved at your folly and sin but they will love you. You are sure of their protection, sure of their basic trust in you, sure that they will not give up hoping you turn out OK and you are sure that they will persevere with you even when you disappoint them badly. Paul emphasizes the word "always". Because love is not much if it is "sometimes". Love sometimes protects - but what about when it does not? Love sometimes trusts - what sort of trust is that when it is abruptly withdrawn. God's love is always love. It is neither fickle or unreliable. It's there just like the sun, the stars and the turning circle of the earth. It's solid. And we who are made in His image should be "solid" as well.

Love Never Fails

{8} Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. {9} For we know in part and we prophesy in part, {10} but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. {11} When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. {12} Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. {13} And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Love is permanent. By nature, it has to be. Can you imagine the grief of loving God for a thousand years and then having it all go to pieces? That would not be love, that would be the darkest of Hells. True love must last forever. It must be eternal if it is to be love at all. Nothing devastates us as much as the loss of love. The loss of faith and the loss of hope are close cousins but the loss of love is truly terrible. Fortunately, all three remain and if the object of our faith, hope and love is eternal, is God, then we have nothing to fear. Congregational prophecy was highly thought of in the Corinthian church, yet, for all its spectacular power both it and the gift of tongues were temporary manifestations of the Spirit to help us mature in love. Love was the end, prophecy and tongues are temporary means. Knowledge will pass away. How? Knowledge is only needed if we don't know or can't see. I need the Bible to tell me about God because I cannot figure it out for myself. I do not see Him face to face. When I do see Him face to face I won't need to go to Bible studies! The truths of Scripture will remain because the word

of God abides forever. However, in Heaven I will not experience God's Word as knowledge from a book but personally and directly in the Spirit - as the angels now do. Knowledge as such will pass away. In Heaven I will know fully even as I am fully known. Who looks at the weather report to know if it is raining outside? You look out the window and see. If you can directly experience it, you don't need to "know about" it. It is in this sense that knowledge will pass away. It will be the difference between a romance by e-mail and the wedding day. Love will replace knowledge as the overwhelming reality of Heaven.

The Greatest of These Is Love

It tells the Corinthians to place love as their top spiritual priority. If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. {2} If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. {3} If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Without it all their other spiritual achievements are hollow and empty. Without love we cannot fulfill the two great commandments to love God and neighbor. Without love we may be approved of men but we cannot be approved of God. If God is love and God dwells in us, then we must love others. It's that simple. If we do not love then God does not dwell in us (1 John 3:14-18) Love, not faith, is the paramount virtue. Faith ushers us into the Kingdom and accomplishes great works for God.

However, faith does not confer value. Love does. A small loving act is more valuable than a huge selfish act - no matter how much faith is involved. Faith may work miracles but it is love that determines whether it is a miracle of value or a work of iniquity. (Matthew 7:20-23 NKJV) "Therefore by their fruits you will know them. {21} "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. {22} "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' {23} "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" Love is the foundation for the commandments, for all righteousness and for every work that is truly of God. It is preeminent over the gifts of tongues or faith or prophecy or even dramatic self-sacrifice. Love then is what we as Christians are about. It's what we need to focus on and to do. Let's get on with it now.

Our Bodies Are Temples of the Holy Spirit

God loves your physical body and it is very precious to Him. Jesus showed God's love for our bodies when He healed so many people. God states His care and love for our body in Psalm 139, where He says we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" and that our physical bodies are amongst the concern of His thoughts. Finally, God has made a future for our bodies when He will resurrect them from the dead. God dwells in our physical bodies and calls them His temple. Our bodies, like temples, are sacred sites where God dwells. Other people should be able to go to us as temples of the living God and meet God there! What an amazing thought! This article will look into the analogy of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and attempt a start on a Christian attitude to our physical bodies.

For you created my innermost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. {14} I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. {15} My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, {16} your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. {17} How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! {18} Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. (Psalms 139:13-18 NIV)

1. We are continually told that our physical bodies are the almost meaningless products of time, chance, genetics, radiation, chemicals and our mother's moods in pregnancy. Here David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit speaks about how God knows all things about him. The first statement he makes is that "you knit me together in my mother's womb". This is not a statement of ignorance. This is not "the God of the gaps" filling in because David did not understand genetics. This is a faith statement that God is personally involved as our Creator in making our bodies. And, yes, this does apply to those born with disabilities as the following incident from the gospels shows...

As He (Jesus) walked along, He saw a man blind from birth. {2} His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" {3} Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. {4} We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. {5} As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:1-5 NRSV)

Jesus went on to heal him. In this case both the disability and the healing were from God. In my own case I was born a moderately severe epileptic, which resulted in some very painful years. Over the past five years I have seen an enormous improvement as the direct result of prayer. I believe that again both the disability and the healing were of God. We need to adopt a Christian perspective that sees our bodies through the eyes of faith. By faith David saw that we are deliberately formed, and fearfully and wonderfully made. By faith Jesus took away the blame for disabilities. By faith we are healed and by faith we know that God is involved with and deeply loves our physical bodies.

2. Psalm 139:16, "Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

God has a plan and purpose for your life that involves your physical body and which commenced from when you were within the womb. God is better than ultrasound - He sees your

unformed body in the womb with the eyes of love. God does not behold us with impersonal detachment or scientific curiosity. (Psalm 33:18) God's beholding is a beholding of the lover gazing, the father yearning, the heart following the eyes to the object of love. There is no such thing as "just a fetus" to God; the child in the womb is a person He loves in progress towards plans He has made. No matter what the circumstances of your birth were, whether you were wanted or unwanted, planned or unplanned, loved or abandoned or rejected, there is One who was watching all of this and yearning for you. There is One who loves you, even God, and He has a plan for your life.

3. Psalm 139:14, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

David looks on his body with the eyes of faith and says "I am fearfully and wonderfully made". This is something I struggle with. I look at my skinny frame and distinct lack of biceps and feel that I have missed out in the handsomeness stakes. It was only as I did some reading about artificial intelligence and computer programming that I began to realize that my arm is a marvel that no robot arm can match, my eyes are wonders no camera can ever come close to. My ability to walk over all kinds of terrain, ride bicycles, climb cliffs and swim through water is not matched by any vehicle that man has made despite billions of dollars of research. And with my nervous system I got a free multimedia super-computer with self-programming capacity! At birth! For free! Unearned! My first degree was in chemistry and the ability of the liver to synthesize complex macromolecules out of last night's dinner is mind-boggling. No chemist could go anywhere near it. A Japanese company apparently attempted the commercial replication of the "simple" transformation of glucose into glycogen, a reaction fundamental to life which the liver performs every day. Before they gave up they had built a factory occupying a square mile and costing a vast sum of money (some billions of dollars). This is just one of the countless molecular miracles that happen as your fish and chips and cup of tea become muscles, bone and brain cells. As skinny as I may be it is by faith and in truth and with much love that I can say "I am fearfully and wonderfully made".

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. {13} "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. {14} And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. {15} Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! {16} Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." {17} But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. {18} Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. {19} Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? {20} For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:12-20 NRSV)

4. 1 Corinthians 6:12, "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything."

Our bodies are meant to be under our control. The Corinthians had latched onto grace, but not onto discipline and constructive living. Culturally Corinth was sophisticated, debauched and "liberated"; it was renowned throughout the Roman Empire for "broad-minded promiscuity" and the use of prostitutes in pagan religious worship was very common. The new converts to Christianity came from backgrounds that naturally turned grace into license and used slogans

such as "all things are lawful for me." Knowing human nature, it would be remarkable indeed if they made a smooth transition to a godly and disciplined lifestyle. So Paul lays down some very basic principles for them concerning our bodies. The first of these is that we are to be masters of our bodies and dedicate them to good godly purposes. Therefore, life-dominating addictions to alcohol, sex, drugs, binge eating or physical "adrenaline highs" are major problems for the Christian life. This leads to the second of Paul's principles.

5. 1 Corinthians 6:13, "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."

The body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body. The purpose of our bodies is found in God - not in sexual pleasure or the indulgence of appetites as the Corinthian slogan "food is for the stomach and the stomach for food." implied. God is greater than our earthly appetites which will pass away. Our bodies have an eternal value which is found in the Lord. Thus we need to take a radical "counter-cultural" view and see that our bodies are temples - not amusement parks. The Lord is "for the body". He is "for" your body, not against it! Here we have to make a distinction between "the flesh" (Greek "sarx") which God opposes and the "body" (Greek "soma") which He loves and will raise from the dead. "The flesh" (sarx) is the spiritual principle of self-centeredness and disobedience to God that has been biologically worked into our present bodies through habit, training and memory. "The body" (soma) is God's vehicle for self-expression in a material world. It is with our bodies, given to God, that we speak words of truth and love, touch, comfort, heal others, express practical care and love and worship Him. God loves our bodies as they glorify and serve Him. We will see that He has an eternal plan for them too!

6. 1 Corinthians 6:14, "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power."

The destiny of our bodies is in heaven. Just as Jesus' physical body was raised from the dead so that the scars still showed and He could eat fish, so our bodies will be raised. There will be a continuation between this present body and the body we receive in heaven, as well as some very significant differences! God will not leave us to rot. He will not just make new bodies for us out of nothing. He will raise our bodies from the grave and then work a transforming miracle on them. Our present bodies are in some way the starting point for our eternal bodies. Later on in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians he answers the question "How then are the dead raised..." Let's look at what he wrote.

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" {36} Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. {37} And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain; perhaps wheat or some other grain. {38} But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. (1 Corinthians 15:35-55 NKJV)

We see the principle that our present bodies are connected to our eternal bodies just as a seed is connected to the plant that comes after the seed dies. It is the life within the seed that continues on, and God gives it a body that he has appointed. Yet the seed is not unimportant, in fact it is vitally necessary and to be prized. We are not to despise our mortal bodies any more than a farmer would despise his seeds.

{39} All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. {40} There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. {41} There

is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. {42} So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. {43} It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. {44} It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Though there is a continuity between our present mortal bodies and our glorious resurrection bodies there is also a discontinuity. There will be a great variety of resurrection bodies and each shall receive the body that the Lord has prepared for him or her. These bodies will all be incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual. They will perfectly express our love of God and perfectly receive the knowledge of God. However, they will differ in glory - presumably as a result of the different rewards that Christians will receive.

There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. {45} And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. {46} However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. {47} The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. {48} As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. {49} And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

The "last Adam" is Christ who heads up a new race of men and women. Just as Adam's descendants ended up going from 'dust to dust' so Christ's "born-again" race has a heavenly destiny and "bears the image" (stamp) of the heavenly. When we are born again even our bodies are headed for heaven. Just as Jesus' resurrected body went into heaven on the Mount of Olives as His disciples gazed on, so we will ascend into heaven and meet the returning Christ in the air in our resurrected physical bodies. Paul describes this moment as a sudden and glorious change.

{50} Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. {51} Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; {52} in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. {53} For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. {54} So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." {55} "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Our present physical bodies shall come out of the grave and the Death's temporary victory will be over. Furthermore, they shall take up a new immortal nature that is no longer subject to death so that death is completely and permanently defeated. Our present "seed" bodies shall suddenly "in the twinkling of an eye" be changed into the "full grown plant" which will be imperishable, incorruptible and immortal. The destiny of our body is in heaven. It is not to be despised as "the prison of the soul" or abandoned to promiscuity as if it did not matter. While flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, or the corruptible inherit incorruption, it is still important. Our bodies are like a seed that dies and bears fruit within the Kingdom of God.

7.1 Corinthians 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

Here Paul makes the statement that our bodies are "members of Christ". Now we are used to thinking of ourselves as "members of the body of Christ" but this, however, is quite different.

Paul is talking about our physical bodies being the "members", the limbs, of Christ Himself. If Jesus wants to hug someone He does not send the Holy Spirit to give a hug, He sends you or me. If Jesus Christ wants to feed someone He does not generally drop a hamburger from heaven in their lap - He sends you or me to physically, practically feed them. When Jesus smiles it is through your eyes and my eyes. We are the physical interface of Jesus with this world. We are His members; we are His physical body on earth. Have you ever had your computer monitor crash so that everything else was working but you could not see your computer screen? You feel helpless, so little can be done without that interface. That's how it is with our bodies; they are like computer monitors, interfaces indicating Jesus' activity in us and through us. They make Jesus accessible to others. What use is a deep spiritual life that goes completely unexpressed and is unreadable by others? It's like a super-computer with no output. Useless! As good as dead! For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:26 NKJV). Open rebuke is better than secret love (Proverbs 27:5 KJV). Our inner world should show through and be expressed so that others can see it, hear it and understand it. This is God's role for our bodies. Your body is part of Christ therefore it should never be "joined with a prostitute". Our bodies are for expressing Christ's love - not human lust.

8. 1 Corinthians 6:16, 17 Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." {17} But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him.

There are difficulties with this passage. It seems to indicate that even the most casual sexual act is an indissoluble "one flesh" commitment on the same level as marriage. Certainly sex is a very intimate act with deep spiritual and emotional consequences and a "bond" is established. Sex is serious - and that is what I think Paul is trying to state here. He is saying "there is no such thing as harmless casual sex." I am cautious about stating that, on the basis of this verse, you have to marry anyone you have sex with (as some argue). If Paul was intending that then he would have exhorted single male Corinthians to marry the prostitutes they had slept with. He made no such recommendation! His next statement builds on the image of intimacy and unity: "But anyone united with the Lord becomes one spirit with Him". Our spirit and God's spirit are indissolubly joined, never to be separated, in eternal spiritual intimacy. Though a prostitute may temporarily satisfy a desire for carnal intimacy, the Christian can experience permanent deep spiritual intimacy with God. The groundwork for our union with God was laid by Christ's death on the cross which gave us access to the Father. This union was sealed by the reception of the Holy Spirit - God's intimate, loving, indwelling Presence, at Pentecost. We are one with God even though we may not sense it. God has made us one with Him in a union that no power on heaven or on earth can separate. It takes a lifetime to fully grasp that! How does this affect how we use our bodies? Two things 1) The spirit animates the body. If our spirit is one with God's Spirit, then that relationship is what should animate our bodies and direct the life that is within them. 2) Our desire for intimacy should be directed heavenward and find at least a very substantial part of its satisfaction in God. It is a very misdirected desire for intimacy that uses prostitutes or engages in casual sex. Thus immorality is inappropriate for someone who is joined to God.

9. 1 Corinthians 6:18 NRSV, "Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."

Sexual immorality is so blinding and persuasive that we cannot linger around and "play with fire". We need to take Paul's advice and flee! Though this may lead to damaged relationships, anger and recriminations from the "rejected" party, God will honor us. Joseph fled sexual

immorality with Potiphar's wife and was falsely accused by an angry and vindictive woman. He went to jail and really suffered for being good. It must have seemed that being pure did not pay. However, God did not forget him, but remembered his godly heart and elevated Joseph to the position of Prime Minister of the only superpower in the world at that time. The pragmatic reason we are to flee sexual immorality is that it is a sin against our own bodies. The medical toll from promiscuity is high - abortion, infertility, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract and bowel infections, emotional and psychiatric disorders, plus the side-effects from various contraceptives are just part of the cost that our bodies are paying for a sexually liberated lifestyle. Our body does not like being sinned against.

10. 1 Corinthians 6:19 NRSV, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

A temple is a sacred site where a deity is supposed to dwell and can be accessed and experienced. Your body is a temple. It is a sacred site. It is holy. It is never to be violated or profaned. The God within the temple is not some god of thunder or wind, a monkey god or a good luck charm. The God within is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in the temple of your body dwells the God who was brooding over the waters at Creation, who is the source of wisdom, who is love on fire with holiness, the God from whom all lesser gods flee in terror, who is mighty, powerful, majestic and righteous. Defile His temple and beware! This Holy Spirit is our possession from God, our treasure. Human beings were always meant to be Spirit-indwelt beings, indwelt with the Holy Spirit as images of God. Our bodies were part of this design. We are temples, sacred, wonderful, filled with the power and presence of God. People should be able to come to a Christian just as an idol-worshiper goes to a temple to find the god there. People should be able to come to us and find Christ in residence. They should be able to come to the Christ-indwelt bodies of Christians and sense the holiness and presence of God. People go to temples with needs -and I think they should have their needs met by Christ in us. People should be able to come to Christians for wisdom, a word from God, guidance in life, healing, encouragement etc., and we should be able to minister to them not in our own strength but out of the power of Christ who indwells us. We cannot do this if our bodies are given to immorality.

11. 1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 NKJV, "And you are not your own? {20} For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Paul goes on to ask "And whose body is it anyway?" It is God's! He bought it and He can do what He likes with it. If I buy a car I can do what I like with that car. I can drive it or leave it in the garage or even take it on a testing rally drive. It's my car and I say what I do with it and where it goes. God bought your body on the cross. He paid a very high price for it - His own beloved Son. It is His - He can say what happens to your body, where it should go and what it should do. He has leased it back to you with strict instructions as to its use and in many cases a few improvements and healings. He has filled it with the Holy Spirit. He has a plan to raise it from the dead and give it back to you in a glorious state - but that depends to no small extent on what you choose to do with it now. God's plan for your body, which belongs to Him, is good. Most of the time He likes to heal it and see it prosper! However, the plan includes holiness (Hebrews 14:12). Therefore, "glorify God with your body".

12. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJV: Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, {10} nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. {11} And such were some of you. But you were

washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”

Now let's jump back a few verses to some tough verses of Paul's. In verse 1-8 Paul is arguing that Christians should not go to court against each other - and be judged before unbelievers. Paul points out that "the unrighteous" are not members of the Christian kingdom and therefore should not be our judges. Why don't they inherit the Kingdom of God? Because, amongst other things they practice sexual immorality and abuse their bodies. Most of the above sins involve the abuse of the body in some way. These sins disqualify people from heaven. Sure they can be forgiven if we repent. However, they are meant to be left behind at conversion and never indulged in again, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. As we have just seen, the Corinthians were in grave danger of being overwhelmed by their immorality once more and some were still visiting the temple prostitutes. Paul takes their doctrine of liberty and cautions them "Do not be deceived", evidently they were being deceived and were playing fast and loose with the holiness and judgment of God using a false doctrine of "grace" to justify license. This is not innovative theology - it is deception (at least that is what Paul calls it). We cannot play with sexual sin. We have to get rid of it and accept the washing, cleansing, and sanctification that are from God.

The Christian's Struggle with Sin

The following passage describes the apostle Paul's struggle with sin. It also describes the personal experience of every Christian that I know. The Spirit and the flesh are at war with each other. But not permanently. When we receive our resurrection bodies that struggle will cease. It is a temporary struggle that the overcoming enduring Christian will one day win.

(Romans 7:14-8:4 NKJV) For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. {15} For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. {16} If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. {17} But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.

{18} For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. {19} For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

{20} Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. {21} I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. {22} For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. {23} But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. {24} O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? {25} I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

(8:1) There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. {2} For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. {3} For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, {4} that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

What is Paul's main point in this? **THOUGH WE STRUGGLE WITH SIN GOD DOES NOT CONDEMN US BECAUSE WE ARE IN CHRIST JESUS.** If you think I am shouting at you - then you are right, and I am shouting Hallelujah! "Sin in the flesh" is condemned and will pass away, but all who are in Christ Jesus will become glorious eternal beings with imperishable and magnificent bodies (1 Corinthians 15:25-55). Our sin will be far behind us then; it will have vanished like smoke on a windy day. You see for the Christian our sin is not part of us though it is closely associated with us and affects us as Paul twice says above {verses 17&20} Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. Sin is only a part of us if we actively consent to it. Paul goes so far as to say "it is no longer I who do it". What a cop out! Not at all! It's the truth. All that is truly us is under the control of the Christian's will. This sin is a compulsion apart from Paul's will. It did not proceed from Paul's will therefore it was not Paul's deed. The sin was committed by Paul's body but it was not committed by Paul the person. {22} For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. {23} But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. {24} O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? {25} I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul thus makes a clear division between what his mind and will want and what his flesh/body wants. He also sees his flesh as temporal, earthbound and sin-indwelt while his mind and will are in willing subjection to God. {18} For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. {19} For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

This struggle between his flesh and his mind and will is so intense and so humiliating that the apostle cries out {24} O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? It is the body that holds him back from being the Christian he wants to be. How does it hold us back? By being the dwelling place of sin. The mind is capable of renewal but the body is not, it needs to die and be resurrected. It has been fatally affected by the Fall. In some way it stores sin like a mighty dam stores water. The biblical image is vivid - sin dwells, it abides, it is perfectly at home in the human body. Why is this so? I can think of a few reasons. Firstly, the body was primarily designed for living on earth and interacting with the material world around us. It was not made to grasp hold of eternity - for instance our five senses and all our organs operate without any knowledge of the eternal. They know only this world. Therefore, sin can operate through our bodies more easily than through our spirits, which are attuned to God (for the Christian). Secondly, our bodies are creatures of habit. They learn certain ways of acting and reacting, speak with certain accents, move in certain ways all of which are hard to unlearn. Once the body learns something it takes a long while to unlearn it. The body learns the ways of sin and programs them in. It physically records them and some of our habits come back to us. Thirdly, God designed our bodies to experience physical pleasure from eating, drinking, sex and athletic activities amongst many other things. He wanted us to enjoy Eden and to be motivated to do these things. Unfortunately, many sins are also very pleasurable physically and our body is strongly motivated to repeat them, thus turning them into habits which are hard to unlearn.

The next question to my mind is "Why didn't God just take all this junk out at the moment of my conversion?" He did. It's not you any more - it's your body that you are stuck in until you die. After that you are rid of it. Which leads to the obvious - then why didn't God clean out my body as well as my mind at conversion? Some people seem to be marvelously delivered from sin after they are saved - they give up alcohol, smoking or drugs overnight. However, no-one is freed from all sin. Purity of heart is something we have to pursue, but God has given us some mighty help through the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:16-18 NKJV) I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. {17} For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. {18} But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The desires of the flesh remain, but when we walk in the Spirit we can have mastery over them. The original Greek is quite emphatic on this point "ou me telesete" which translates "not at all fulfill" "in absolutely no way fulfill". When our life is conducted according to the Spirit the flesh does not have a chance. It cannot make us do its will.

How then do we walk in the Spirit? Paul makes the statement "walk in the Spirit" as if it was the most obvious thing in the world, as if no Christian needed to be told how to do it. This is very irritating of the apostle, at least it seems that way to me. However, Paul's letters do give us plenty of clues as to what he was talking about. So let's go back to Romans 8 - just after where we left off earlier. (Romans 8 is a whole chapter on walking in the Spirit.)

(Romans 8:1-6 NKJV) There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. {2} For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. {3} For what the

law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, {4} that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. {5} For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. {6} For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

The first two things we find out about walking in the Spirit is that a) it frees us from the Law b) it fulfills the Law. Blessed contradictions! That is not a contradiction at all. Walking in the Spirit is a law-full activity in that those who walk in the Spirit are law-abiding; they dwell in God's commandments and obey them. However, they are not judged by them. They are free from the Law's demands and threats. Yet they do what it says. They do God's will out of the inner impulses of the Spirit rather than because of the threats and promises of the Law. They do this because of their mindset. The set of their minds is on godly things. Those who walk in the Spirit habitually turn to thinking of God and godly things. Just as a miser turns to thinking of money or a young girl to thoughts of her boyfriend, the Christian walking in the Spirit turns to thoughts of God. You can choose to set your mind on your appetites or on the Lord. On sex, money, and vanity; or on faith, hope and love. If your mind is habitually set on God, it is hard to sin. Habitual sins tend to gain control of us in our leisurely moments when our minds drift to thinking of "nothing in particular," then like a train jumping its rails it switches into the track of the flesh and the thoughts that we dread. These fleshly musings are deceptive. Soon we are tricked, overpowered and led into sin. (Ephesians 4:22-23 NKJV) that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, {23} and be renewed in the spirit of your mind. James describes this process with frightening accuracy (James 1:14-15 NKJV) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. {15} Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

To walk in the Spirit then we must master our thoughts, and much of the New Testament is devoted to this very theme - the renewing of our mind. (Romans 12:1-2 NKJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For our purposes now we need to consider how to renew our minds and the answer (surprise) is in Romans 8. In verses 9-25 Paul shows us that the renewed mind involves a renewed and hope-full identity (as sons of God), in verses 26-27 that it involves a renewed and personal relationship to God through prayer "in the Spirit," and in verses 28-39 that the Christian mind has a renewed confidence in the goodness of God, which is demonstrated towards us in all of life's circumstances.

How then can we win the struggle against sin? By taking charge of what we believe and where we set our minds and how we pray. Victory in this war is costly and requires action and discipline. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NKJV) Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. {25} And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. {26} Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. {27} But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. Paul writes in competitive terms here. The struggle with sin is not for the casual dabbler in righteousness. It is strenuous, "athletic", vigorous and in earnest. It involves having a definite aim (verse 26) and a lifestyle that is carefully regulated in a way calculated to bring about godliness (verses 24,25,27). Self-

mastery involves being domineering towards one's body in order to "bring it into subjection". The phrase "I discipline my body" comes from the phrase "to give a black eye to" and means "I beat my body severely" or "I beat it until it is black and blue". Paul's ministry meant that he had to have little consideration for his physical comfort or security. His body could not be allowed to determine his agenda and the call of comfort must never drown out the call of God.

To sum up then we see that the struggle against sin is a struggle that God does not condemn us for having. He is aware of our anguish and His grace is sufficient for us. He has given us the Holy Spirit to help us win it. By walking in the Spirit we can stop the desires of the flesh taking control of us. In order to walk in the Spirit, we need to set our mind to the things of God. This means we need to take our stand on who we are in Christ Jesus, praying in the Spirit at all times and being very conscious of God's destiny for us and goodness towards us in Christ. This strengthens us to undertake the pointed self-disciplines of the Christian life and the calling that God has for each of us so that we may win the imperishable crown that waits for the faithful Christian.

Has Science Gone Too Far With Cloning?

With the cloning of "Dolly", an adult sheep, the possibility of cloning mammals – including humans – has opened up. (For a good article on the technology behind this go to the New Scientist website at <http://www.newscientist.com>.) Scientists have also recently begun the process of storing human memories on silicon chips so they can be implanted in the brain and experienced by others. (BBC--TV "Future Fantastic Series - Brainstorm") In the not too distant future it is envisaged that we will be able to replicate a person's body, mind and memories. In the USA and many other countries this would currently be perfectly legal. This article will explore the biblical ethics of cloning human beings and why it just can't be God's will.

(Genesis 2:20-25 NKJV)

So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. {21} And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. {22} Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. {23} And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." {24} Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. {25} And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

The Quandary

The argument for cloning...

Cloning human beings has many advantages and could solve infertility problems, help with the scarcity of suitable organ transplants, and give rise to a society of physically perfect individuals. Combined with accurate genetic testing and a culling of defective humans through abortions we could produce a physically excellent society with far lower health costs, more productive workers, more compatible and less stressed marriages, and a longer overall lifespan. Utopia through genetic engineering. Wouldn't God want this? After all He did the first bit of genetic engineering, didn't He?

The argument against cloning...

Cloning human beings is almost the ultimate act of human arrogance, other than openly declaring to be God. We do not need or want a society of physically perfect but morally insensate people. To move toward such a world is to denigrate the value of the not so beautiful people. As Mark Twain said "God must like ordinary looking folk considering how he made so many of them". This is a genie that will not go back in the bottle, it is a mess so complex that if we ever permit it, it will be our nightmare forever.

Was Eve the first human clone?

God took a rib from Adam and formed Eve from it to produce a being that was "bone of his (Adam's) bone and flesh of his flesh" but of the opposite gender. I believe that each human cell

has the possibility of being any other cell. For instance, a foot could be an eye. A complex system of "gene expression and repression" determines which cells are "turned on" or "turned off" and whether a cell has male or female characteristics. What God did with Adam was not cloning. Cloning would have made Adam and Adam not Adam and Eve. Also current cloning techniques produce babies of identical genetic composition to the gene donor - not instant mature adults which is what happened with Eve. We still need a uterus and the process of gestation to take a single cell and turn it into a viable cloned mammal. Theologically speaking God is a great genetic engineer who is not so dull as to make the first two human beings absolutely identical in all respects. He made people that were complementary and brought them into perfect spiritual and emotional oneness.

The marriage of Adam and Eve was the closest ever experienced. Eve was beloved as "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" there was total openness, not even the presence of shame, and a deep and a fulfilling creative commission to be carried out in a beautiful and perfectly romantic environment and a personal intimate and daily communion with God. This was marred not by physical compatibility but by disobedience. Their genetic closeness would have survived their expulsion from Eden but of itself it was not an adequate basis for their marriage.

Being genetically related did not prevent shame and guilt from taking their toll and causing them to blame each other and hide from God. The attempt to genetically engineer your perfect partner would be futile without the learning of corresponding spiritual and relational skills. Does God's genetic engineering of Eve give us a mandate to do likewise? To state the obvious, different mandates exist for the Creator and the creature. The Creator is allowed to choose His methods for, after all, He is All-Wise. We are not. We are quite unable to predict, let alone control, the future of our technology. This alone should move us to caution in such a dangerous area as cloning humans.

Why does God not "genetically engineer" people anymore?

God stopped making people from ribs after He made Eve. His intent is for people to reproduce after their own kind via natural means. He wants children to be raised in families, not nurseries. He wants love, not calculation, to be behind their conception, and He wants children to be unique. For each to grow up with their own hard won identity and sense of self. The reproduction of humans, who are the image of God, is to be sexual, intimate and loving. The upbringing of these images of divinity is to be in a committed, caring, heterosexual family setting. The cloning of humans is unnatural, sterile, pragmatic and outside of the intended purposes of God. There is also a theological reason why God did not clone anyone after Eve. Sin dwells in the flesh. (Romans 7) Sin passed from generation to generation via our bodies. When I majored in psychology at University I was taught that criminality has a proven family history beyond the influence of the environment. Time is the great healer of the worst of these traits which seem to run through three or at most four generations before petering out. This is confirmed by Scripture which sees gross sins and their consequent judgment passing to the "third and fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6,7) but no further. The mercy of time is not available to clones. Cloning passes these negative traits on unchanged and undiminished by time. God does not "clone people" because He is merciful to families and does not want to see the perpetuation of their iniquity. Unfortunately, evil but powerful people would be among the most likely to clone themselves and their refined ambition and treachery would be undiminished, unchanged and finely perfected through the centuries.

Technology is never evil, it's the people who misuse it...

This is a good sounding argument that in reality is completely void of meaning. Technology does not exist "by itself." Technology automatically goes with people, hammers with carpenters, guns with soldiers. And these people are primarily motivated by self-interest and greed. We do not live in a logical or altruistic world. We live in a commercial and political world where the main driving forces are money, sex, and power. These elemental forces inevitably win out, often turning the technology into a comical caricature of what it originally intended to be. Cranio-facial (plastic) surgery started out as a wonderful way to help burn victims and those with birth defects. Now it is primarily used to enhance the sex appeal of the dissatisfied. Vain people with money have hijacked a wonderful technology. As nobly as cloning human beings may begin it is money, sex and power that will ultimately control the long-term future of the technology. Nuclear power has been completely subjugated to commercial and military interests with token applications to public health. The "Green Revolution" is turning into a nightmare. The dash for cash for genes may yet create massive (and massively profitable for a few) world-wide hunger. These grand failures of good but powerful technologies should warn us that it will most likely happen again. The cloning of humans, if allowed, will be misused, commercialized and corrupted.

You have no right to put a cap on human progress. It's too early for ethics... let Science be free.

This assumes a very rosy and optimistic view of human progress. This optimistic view held sway in the Humanist movement that dominated Western thought from the mid to late 1800's until the end of World War 2. However, Humanism is now a spent philosophical force. Two World Wars and countless atrocities displayed on television have muted the optimism of earlier years. The sheer responsibility for what we have done to the environment and to ourselves has forced a rethink, that I see as beginning with Hiroshima and the reported comment of the pilot of "Enola Gay" "My God, what have we done?" That question is still echoing in the halls of science, government and industry. While no-one has found a way to stop progress there is a general consensus that it needs to be subjected to ethical constraints. Numerous scientific, government and industry bodies have been set up to examine ethical issues associated with technology. They nearly all say that ethical issues should be addressed right at the start of the development of any technology, especially those technologies that have the power to fundamentally change us as a race or extinguish us forever. When the progress of a technology such as the cloning of humans has these sort of planet-changing potentials, there are greater things at stake than the freedom of science. We need to check whether we want it before we endorse it. And we must do so knowing ourselves.

The difference between a clone and an identical twin

A clone would be younger than the person, artificial and deliberately conceived. A clone does not come into a family setting as a result of love, but into a social setting as an expedient way of providing organ transplants or eternal youth. Identical twins have separate personalities and develop their own closely interwoven identities, marry and raise separate families and pursue life as true individuals. However, in reality clones will exist to satisfy someone else. They will probably be replicas of someone raised for a role. Clones will be deliberately the same physically as the "master copy" and the wonderful sense of serendipity that comes with identical twins is, of course, lost. Clones will probably be slaves -who would clone themselves with the view to the clone leading an independent existence? The clone may never be expected to raise families, live a normal life or develop a separate and complete identity from their "parent". In these ways and many others identical twins and clones would be different.

Shall we be like God?

(Genesis 3:1-7 NKJV) Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" {2} And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; {3} "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" {4} Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. {5} "For God knows that on the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." {6} So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave it to her husband, and he ate. {7} Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

There is an obvious analogy between eating the "fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." and eating the fruit of genetic engineering. It seems that we shall "be like God" on the day we head in this direction. It appears that it will "make us wise" and be good for us. But this is an illusion born of strong temptation. In fact, it will leave us naked and desolate and under the judgment of God. We are being tempted to defy God more and more. This can only result in our destruction. The path to being like God is not technological progress but personal holiness. (Romans 8:28-29 NKJV) And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. {29} For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (1 John 3:2 NKJV) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

A Sickening Society

When a particular evil has an economic basis it can remain entrenched for centuries e.g. slave-trading, usury, drugs, gambling and prostitution. Cloning has the potential to go wrong and stay wrong for a long time. The private cloning of the powerful to perpetuate their dynasties. The government and military cloning of "perfect soldiers". The fashion industry pays big money for a stable of perfect, genetically sound models. The pornography industry paying a fortune to clone bodies for its "high class" films. Some sections of the pharmaceutical industry could secretly clone people for drug testing. Football and baseball teams might clone top players and own the genetic rights to their stars. The possible permutations that self-interest, secrecy and big money could bring to human cloning are too frightening to mention. If it starts, we will be forever diminished. We will be a sickening society.

Babel Revisited

(Genesis 11:1-9 NIV) Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. {2} As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. {3} They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. {4} Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." {5} But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. {6} The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they

have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. {7} Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." {8} So the LORD scattered them from there all over the earth, and they stopped building the city. {9} That is why it was called Babel – because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Babel was the first society-wide technological rebellion against God. It was the discovery of building technology that sparked the rebellion. They used the latest (though inferior) building technology as they substituted bricks for stone in their effort to supplant nature and build a tower that would reach to heaven. It was a primitive affair compared to genetic engineering, but contains the same essential ingredients. There was a desire for self-exaltation (so that we may make a name for ourselves), a wish to transcend the limits of the human condition (a tower that reaches the heavens), a use of artificial materials (they used brick instead of stone and tar for mortar), and a perceived social benefit (not being scattered over the face of the whole earth). The perceived social benefit was in fact contrary to the will of God

(Genesis 9:1 NIV) "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth."

God considered this first feeble technological rebellion to be a sufficient threat to godliness for Him to act to disperse the people. Their single-minded, society-wide self-exaltation and rebellion did not bode well. God's comment that "nothing they plan to do will be impossible to them." is not a compliment! It is a warning that if left to itself the human race would have gone from arrogant to unthinkable in its pursuit of evil. Cloning has all the above hallmarks of a society-wide technological rebellion against God similar to the tower of Babel. God's comment that "nothing they plan to do will be impossible to them" seems on the verge of fulfillment as we toy with our genetic future. This leads us to the obvious question - will God step in (as he did at Babel) to prevent the fulfillment of human cloning?

Will God intervene?

If God intervenes it will probably be through His church and the intercession of His saints. Believing prayer has the power to prevent the cloning of human beings. This may seem a trite answer. After all, God has not intervened to stop abortion, genocide, rape and murder. He has not stopped the production of atomic or biological weapons. He has not stopped economic injustice, unfair trade and ruthless exploitation of the poor. Human cloning will probably go ahead. Unless... There is only one force that can stop an economically and politically powerful technology being implemented, and that is God's people. The church is mighty when it acts according to His will in prevailing prayer and prophetic action based on the word of God. Some evils such as slavery, child-labor and the rampant alcoholism of 19th century England have been stopped by God's people working and praying appropriately. Some such as abortion have been pegged back or restricted in many countries. Ground can be won for good providing we do not sit helplessly by, accepting it all as a part of the decay of society as the world comes to an inglorious end. No matter where we are in God's calendar we must be righteous, and righteous people have always boldly resisted evil. Human cloning is evil. You and I - the educated, informed computer literate believers - can bring moral pressure to bear through our words and spiritual pressure to bear through our prayers. Please act now.

Being a Truly Christian Single

(1 Corinthians 7:7 NKJV) For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.

What do Jesus, Paul, John the Baptist, Barnabas, Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, St. Augustine, St. Francis, Mother Teresa and even John Stott (famous English preacher) have in common? They are or were single. Singleness does not mean that God has neglected your needs. It may mean that He has an adventure for you so big that domestic life cannot contain it.

Let me start by saying that I am 43 and single. I was single and chaste until I married at the age of 34. My wife had some deep hurts from her past which affected our marriage and I was too immersed in my ministry to see the explosion coming. I've been single, married and divorced. This is not ideal. It's not society's ideal, and I'm sure it's not God's ideal. As Christians we think that anything less than the ideal is sin, or at least abnormality. I suppose I "should have" been married at 25 and stayed that way forever. But my life didn't, and many lives don't, follow that path. So what should we who have no families and who sit in front of our computers at all hours do? First, the destructive alternatives we are to avoid - here are a few of them:

1. The Sulk - Get even at God, married people and the church by being obnoxiously miserable. Stay away from church to see who will phone up and when no-one does, go and feel indignant for at least three days.

2. I Can't Help It - These are Christian singles who regularly have sex because "they can't help it". Some eventually marry but quite a few just go from partner to partner for the rest of their lives. Too afraid of commitment to marry and too much liking sex to abstain.

3. The Flirt - You don't actually "do it" but you make everyone think you are! You flirt with everything that moves. You start rumors then you feel holier than thou because "they" are accusing you of sins that you aren't committing. You feel justified, indignant and superior, and have lots of friends of the opposite sex all of whom are incredibly frustrated.

4. The Frozen Chosen - You have imploded into yourself and are like an old maid peering out at the street through the lace curtains. You distrust everyone of the opposite sex. You feel extremely proud of your chastity and vaguely morally superior, but you are terribly alone. Plead with God to give you life that you can rejoice in - with a capital L.

5. The "Prayer Warrior" - Pentecostalism has given us a new term for a "busybody"! You often pray alone (sometimes for hours) with members of the opposite sex. Nothing untoward ever happens, but you like the intimate feelings. Dependency is your element. You feel excited when you encounter a bizarre counseling case. You like the look on people's faces when you pray such eloquent, passionate fervent prayers for them. Actually you are taking revenge but don't know it.

6. Sarcastic Sally/Sam - The witty single. Insulated by five layers of sarcasm. You are good at clever conversation but never let the emotions run deep. There's hurt under there and a soft

heart too - unless you have let it turn bitter. Be careful. Don't end up trapped in your own defense mechanism.

7. Castle Constructions Pty Ltd - As soon as you meet someone of the opposite sex and are attracted to them you have plans for marriage! You build fantasy castles on the slimmest of excuses for information. You rarely get to really "know" the other person before they have headed for the hills so your fantasy stays intact. Only facts can bring you to earth. You don't really love the other person - they are just a "peg" to hang your dreams on!

There are much better alternatives than these. (And much worse ones too, I might add!). The New Testament points out that single people have unique opportunities to serve God unhindered. This magazine consumes up to 70 hours a week and would be impossible if I was married. There are many ministries that we can take on only if we have large chunks of time to give to them. Single people can have single hearts and single minds. Marriage pulls you in many directions trying to please God and partner. Most marriages, even Christian ones, are difficult and only 20% are truly happy. Many couples "just exist."

It's better to battle with the constant bouts of loneliness and be fulfilled in the Lord's work than to be in a marriage that "half works," a ministry that never quite takes off and a job you are just doing to feed the family. Some marriages do work, and some people are very happy, and there are always two or three families in every church that make me wish, fervently wish, that I was them. However, I know that "on average" I am happier and more fulfilled than most married people. I can take risks that no married man can responsibly take. I can work hard or enjoy peace and quiet. I can socialize with friends or just watch TV. Above all I can spend hours in uninterrupted prayer and my face shines. It really does now.

When I was 28, I thought singleness would kill me. It hasn't. I used to call it "the tiger" because intense feelings of loneliness and wanting a partner would "pounce" on me out of nowhere with quite some force. When I was 38 and divorced I thought singleness would kill me because I had all the sexual drive of a married man and it had nowhere to go – and it hurt. The grace of God kept me from giving in to some of the temptations that came my way. But I'm not dead, and those feelings have been brought under control and life's OK.

Here are a few of the principles that have helped me get through. I hope they help you.

i. Focus on the goodness of God and be grateful. Someone once wrote a book called "Gratefulness-The Heart Of Prayer". Focus on the 99 things you do have rather than the one you don't.

ii. Don't get obsessed with singleness in your prayer life. I went through a stage when all I prayed about was getting a partner. The lost didn't matter, missions didn't matter, my church didn't matter, my bible college students didn't matter. All I wanted was "her". I was "the most miserable of men". As I re-focused I became happy. You can't blackmail God by saying "I won't pray for anything else until I get this". It just doesn't work.

iii. Stomp on the flesh. Be very careful about your thought life and about the movie theater of your mind. There are some excellent books on renewing your mind- read them. I have found Romans 6 to 8 an enormous help along with 1 John chapters 2&3.

iv. Keep so busy that misery hasn't got a chance to get in. The worst times were times I tried to enjoy idleness. Laziness is an enemy of the soul. I enjoy my work so this helps. Take up

exercise, get involved at church. Join a voluntary Christian organization. The devil finds plenty of use for idle hands and idle minds, and will have a program of unhappiness mapped out for you if you don't map out a better one.

v. Love your church. It's easy to get disappointed with the local church when we are single. Our emotional needs can be very deep and "the church" doesn't seem to care. Persist, a few true friends will eventually emerge.

vi. Don't play games and don't be devastated if people match-make you or start rumors. There is a fruit of the Spirit called forbearance.

vii. Prize the friendships you do have and work on them. They can be richly rewarding. Don't make the mistake of neglecting all friendships while you search for "the one".

14 Principles for Finding a Godly Wife or Husband

I see many Christians destroying themselves in the effort to find a husband or a wife. They wear revealing clothes, hang around nightclubs and feel ashamed in church on Sunday. Pain and desperation are driving them to clumsily adopt the ways of the world in finding a life partner. It can only lead to heartache and disappointment. For most of my adult life I have been single. I know that you CAN be happy and single and that it is possible to joyfully WAIT. Marrying a non-Christian is not a godly option. I won't be discussing that here as I have written a separate article on it. For nine solid reasons not to marry a non-Christian see the next chapter. This article covers 14 principles for finding a godly Christian partner in this rather lonely world.

1. Work on making yourself the sort of person that a godly Christian would LIKE to marry. Be kind, reliable, courteous and attractive. Have your life disciplined and godly and in reasonably good order. Be full of love.
2. Have something interesting about you and work on it. You need to stand out from the crowd a little. Get interested in missions, help the poor, do something different that is still you.
3. Be godly yourself. Have a daily quiet time where you read the Bible and pray and start putting Scripture into practice in your life. Go to church regularly to worship God and switch off your "partner searching periscope" when you go there. In fact, switch it off as often as you can. There is something very unattractive about people who are obviously looking for a partner. Godly people want a godly partner.
4. Make a success of your career. It will cultivate good qualities in you such as forward thinking, planning, diligence, and hard work and it will increase your self-esteem so that you don't feel as devastated by being single. It will also increase your confidence and attractiveness. Godly Christians tend to like people who do their best. Jesus had an obvious soft spot for stewards who did their work diligently and well and makes them the heroes of many of his parables.
5. Make a list of the qualities you really want in a partner and bring this list to God in prayer. Make it quite specific. Use it as a "filter" to prevent you going out with people that are completely wrong. When you make the list remember the golden rule "do unto others as you would want them to do unto you". Would you want your future partner to be drawing up a list like yours? Would you have any chance of getting selected if they did? Is your list too unreal? Make sure that an "average person" - the sort you are likely to marry, is able to fulfill it.
6. Take their weaknesses seriously. If a person is a Christian but has a problem with drugs or alcohol or promiscuity, then be very careful. If they are constantly in financial trouble or always quitting their jobs, you may be marrying misery. Things like eating disorders, very low self-esteem, high levels of hostility, and the need to control people can wreak havoc in a marriage. If they are believers, then God is working in their lives and there is hope, but some believers are not yet ready for responsibility. Some may be "barely believers" and not really committed to long term change. I am not saying don't marry them, I am saying think very, very long and hard before you do. Give them time to grow and to prove themselves before you tie the knot.

7. Marry someone you can pray with. Couples that pray together stay together, and that's a proven fact. The Christian marriages that fail (including mine) have one partner that avoids having daily devotionals together. Prayer really builds deep intimacy into a marriage.
8. Learn to recognize predators. There are quite a number of people who hang around churches to pick up a "Christian partner" and who can fake being a Christian with considerable skill. They generally have no intention of being godly and little intention of marriage. They are generally after unprotected sex with someone innocent and free of disease. Sorry to be that blunt in a Christian magazine, but you need to know the truth. Predators are often betrayed by their lack of true feeling for Christian things and their lack of insight into Scripture. Greed, not tithing, and minor ethical breaches are other good clues. Listen to God's promptings and your intuition. The Holy Spirit will scream "No" at you pretty early on. When God says "No" stop right then and there!
9. Move steadily and wisely towards commitment and put aside undue suspicion, hostility and distrust of the opposite gender. As a rough rule of thumb people end up living up to your projections of their behavior. If you distrust people and are sure they will not stay with you but are "just using you" then they will flee! No-one will stay in a relationship with a person who distrusts them. However, if you treat your partner well and trust, love, and enjoy them and delight in who they are and expect good things from them then they will enjoy your love so much that they will not think of doing anything else except marrying you! Positive people tend to get positive results and negative people tend to get negative results - so deal with your fears.
10. Don't be paranoid about members of the opposite sex. In conservative Christian circles there is almost an assumption that you only talk to members of the opposite sex that you are interested in marrying! That is so destructive! Build many ordinary good friendships and confuse your church thoroughly! It takes the pressure off any emerging relationships and also gives you a better understanding of women/men as the case may be.
11. Get good Christian counseling if you have had traumatic experiences that may be hindering your ability to relate to members of the opposite sex. I can recommend Theophostic Counseling and there is an [article](#) on it elsewhere in the magazine.
12. If you really like someone and they are a good Christian then go for it! I spent a lot of time thinking "so and so is too good for me" and holding back and thus losing out. Being strong and courageous has many advantages and seems to get God's blessing.
13. Many good Christian marriages have developed when a friend introduces two people together and they click. While some friends playing Cupid with your life can be a pain, if you have a few really good friends that you trust, ask them to keep a lookout for you and to pray for the right person to come along. That's how I met Ruth.
14. Ask God's blessing on your efforts and develop the ability to listen to Him. God has a long history of putting some first class romances together. Let Him order your days and they will be pleasant. He really does care!

Why You Should Not Marry an Unbeliever

(1 Corinthians 7:39 NRSV) A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord.

Who you marry is the most important choice you will make next to accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It will affect how happy or unhappy you are, how easily you can serve God, how your children will be brought up, your peace and prosperity and many other things. While most marriages can be improved by effort, making a wise choice to begin with is seen by many people as being absolutely essential to building a great marriage that lasts through all the struggles of life. For the Christian it is important that our life-partners belong to the Kingdom of God and share the same eternal destiny. It is important that they share the same values, morals and priorities and that they model what we model to our children. For these reasons alone it is important for Christians to only marry other Christians.

The Bible gives seven solid reasons why we should not marry an unbeliever. Its writings from beginning to end, from Abraham to Paul reflect God's heart for godly families and believing children who see Christian standards demonstrated by both parents. As you read this article you may be surprised (as I was) by the seriousness with which God takes the question of whom you should marry. It is a big question with serious implications. For some people this article may cause pain. You may realize that a cherished relationship has to come to an end, that a beautiful dream cannot be fulfilled. This creates deep consternation, pain and confusion. During this time pray with others and seek the advice of godly men and women of God. Take your time and work the issue through thoroughly. The Lord is gracious and kind and will lead you in what to do.

The seven reasons are:

1. You are not immune - even the smartest wisest people can be led astray from God by unbelieving partners (1 Kings 11:1-12).
2. There is a fundamental spiritual incompatibility (2 Cor 6:14-7:1, Eph 2:1-3).
3. Because the children may go astray from God (Deut 7:3,4, Neh 13:23-27).
4. It leads to a lifetime of defeat (Joshua 23:11-13).
5. Correcting it can result in drastic and painful separations. (Ezra 9:1-12).
6. Because of the pain it causes to other family members (Genesis 26:34,35; 28:6-9).
7. Because when God's judgment falls the family will be divided (Luke 17:32-34; Genesis 19:12-26).

Now to look at each of these reasons in a bit more detail...

Reason One - You are not immune - even the smartest wisest people can be led astray from God by unbelieving partners.

(1 Kings 11:1-12 NRSV) King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, {2} from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the Israelites, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you; for they will surely incline your heart to follow their gods";

Solomon clung to these in love. {3} Among his wives were seven hundred princesses and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. {4} For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.... {9} Then the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, {10} and had commanded him concerning this matter, that he should not follow other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD commanded. {11} Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. {12} Yet for the sake of your father David I will not do it in your lifetime; I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

In Old Testament times each ethnic group had its own worship system. To marry a foreigner was to marry someone outside your own religion. When Solomon married women from the surrounding nations (something it seems God had personally told him not to do -twice) he was marrying people who did not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Lord. Solomon is said to be the smartest and wisest person alive at that time (1 Kings 4:29-34). God gave him great wisdom and blessing and even appeared to Solomon in dreams.

However, even Solomon's heart was turned away from God by his unbelieving wives, so that in his old age he became an idol worshiper (verses 4-8). When we marry someone we become "one flesh" with them and we are changed by them. We become more and more like them and they become more and more like us. It may be in such small things as gestures and facial expressions. Or it can be so in the deeper things of the spirit. Marrying an unbeliever is like marrying someone with a dose of spirituality and flu. We keep on getting their spiritual ailments passed on to us and because we are so close to them we keep on getting "reinfected".

Unfortunately, goodness and virtue does not seem to be as contagious as sin and spiritual apathy. Solomon did not improve his wives - rather the reverse - he became an idol worshiper and lost his kingdom. You can be wiser than Solomon if you stick to believers when you make your choice of marriage partner.

Reason Two - There is a fundamental spiritual incompatibility.

(2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 NKJV) Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? {15} And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? {16} And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." {17} Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." {18} "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

There is a negative and a positive side to this. Firstly, the negative. The body of a Christian is a temple of the Holy Spirit where God dwells. (See article: "Your Body Is A Temple Of The Holy Spirit"). It is inappropriate for it to be physically joined to the body of an unbeliever. It would be like building a passageway between a temple of God and temple of the Devil.

Unbelievers are not spiritually neutral. (Ephesians 2:1-3 NKJV) And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, {2} in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, {3} among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. Unbelievers are spiritually dead (v.1). They follow the course of this world (v.2) – the downward groove. They are a controlled people whose strings are pulled by "the prince of the power of the air"(v.2). At critical points Satan "pulls the strings" - it may be when you try to send them to Sunday School or arguments may always start before church. You will have someone Satan can control beside you, in your home, influencing your destiny and that of your children. The unbelievers conduct is according to a lower set of principles called "the flesh". V3. We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The flesh is opposed to the Spirit (Gal 5:16,17) and the desires the unbeliever will seek to fulfill will be contrary to your highest and holiest desires. You will be in a life-long tug of war! You will probably miss out on fulfilling much that is truly wonderful and godly as a result.

While on a human level a believer and an unbeliever may love each other it is like two lines meeting at a tangent or ships crossing at sea. They are driven by such fundamentally different principles that there can be no life-long agreement. The difference is between the principles of righteousness and lawlessness, light and darkness, Christ and Belial, the temple of God and the temple of idols. The incompatibility is absolute, basic, and vast.

The Bible, which is God's will and Word does not see compromise as a possibility here. The call is to separate. The positive side is that those who separate will be blessed. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." {17} Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." {18} "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty." Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Every call to separation from sin contains the promise of renewed intimacy with God and being his "sons and daughters". It seems that God really appreciates it when people make this sort of a stand for Him. He is not an aloof and demanding deity. Your separation from an unbeliever will receive God's reward, blessing, approval and result in a deeper walk with Him.

Reason 3 Because the children may go astray from God

(Deuteronomy 7:3-4 NRSV) Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, {4} for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

(Nehemiah 13:23-27 NRSV) In those days also I saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab; {24} and half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and they could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke the language of various peoples. {25} And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves. {26} Did not King Solomon of Israel sin on account of such women? Among the many nations there was no king like him, and he was beloved by his God, and God made him king over all Israel; nevertheless, foreign women even made him sin. {27} Shall we then listen to you and do all this great evil and act treacherously against our God by marrying foreign women?"

The Lord has a real heart for children. He knows they model their parents. It's not just theoretical, children do go astray, children are lost forever because of an ungodly upbringing. In Nehemiah we see a whole generation of mixed up children, unable even to speak Hebrew or Aramaic but adopting the language, culture and beliefs of the nations around them. This undoubtedly included their religious beliefs. When children are turned away from God His anger is kindled and it says He "would destroy you quickly". We see God's anger coming through Nehemiah on this issue: And I contended with them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair; and I made them take an oath in the name of God, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves." God cares about the kids and He will be very angry if you marry an unbeliever.

Reason 4 - It leads to a lifetime of defeat

(Joshua 23:11-13 NRSV) Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God. {12} For if you turn back, and join the survivors of these nations left here among you, and intermarry with them, so that you marry their women and they yours, {13} know assuredly that the LORD your God will not continue to drive out these nations before you; but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until you perish from this good land that the LORD your God has given you.

How many Christians have I seen living defeated lives because they married an unbeliever! They are so numerous. There are three stages to the catastrophe. Firstly, God is no longer powerfully present and giving victory and miracles: know assuredly that the LORD your God will not continue to drive out these nations before you. Then there is a time of bitter frustration and pointlessness, a feeling of being trapped. But they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a scourge on your sides, and thorns in your eyes. The pain can be so sharp that it will be like "a thorn in your eyes". Lastly everything you work for goes up in smoke there may be a foolish financial decision or an affair, alcoholism, unbelieving children, even a deception. You look back on a life that should have been prosperous and rewarding and instead you have "perished from the land". Look around you and see. This is not an idle threat from God. It really does happen.

Reason 5 - Correcting it can result in drastic and painful separations.

(Ezra 9:1-12 NRSV) After these things had been done, the officials approached me and said, "The people of Israel, the priests, and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands with their abominations, from the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. {2} For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons. Thus the holy seed has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands, and in this faithlessness the officials and leaders have led the way." ...Then Ezra the priest stood up and said to them, "You have trespassed and married foreign women, and so increased the guilt of Israel. {11} Now make confession to the LORD the God of your ancestors, and do his will; separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign wives." {12} Then all the assembly answered with a loud voice, "It is so; we must do as you have said..."

Wrong marriages resulted in compulsory divorces on a large scale! They sent their foreign wives away and their children (Ezra 10:3). These divorces were approved by God at the time, it was a choice between two painful alternatives and divorce was seen as the lesser of the two. But it must have been very painful for all concerned. If you are going out with an unbeliever or

engaged to an unbeliever, then Ezra's example is for you. You need to separate from them. Absolutely, finally and quickly (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

Paul addresses the problem of people who get converted as married adults in I Corinthians 7:12-16. This was the case for a large portion of the Corinthian church in the early days of Christianity. If we are married to an unbeliever at the point of our conversion and they are willing to stay we are not to divorce them. Actively killing the marriage is wrong. However, if it ends then it is not to be clung on to. The implication here is that out of God's kindness He does not ask new converts to immediately divorce their partners. He tolerates the marriage. He knows it was not a deliberate marrying of an unbeliever. They were married as unbelievers then one got converted. That is not a deliberate flaunting of God's law by the believer.

(1 Corinthians 7:12-16 NKJV) But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. {13} And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. {14} For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. {15} But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. {16} For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

In a divorce situation between an unbeliever and a believer, the believer is to let the unbeliever go. "Stop clinging on in hope! Let them go! Your hope for their salvation is uncertain!" is Paul's harsh message to the partner of unbelievers. There is a tremendous spiritual incompatibility, and we are "called to peace". In the New Testament God does not ask Christians to divorce non-Christian partners, but if they go, they are free to leave. He would rather we did not marry unbelievers in the first place! This spiritual incompatibility is often intractable. God never promises that unbelieving partners will be saved. Religious conflict often results in painful separations, some before marriage and some after marriage. If you want to avoid a painful heart-wrenching separation - then only date and marry believers!

Reason Six - Because of the pain it causes to other family members.

(Genesis 26:34-35 NRSV) When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath, daughter of Elon the Hittite; {35} and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah... (Genesis 28:1 NRSV) Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women... (Genesis 28:6 NRSV) Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take a wife from there, and that as he blessed him he charged him, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women."

(Genesis 28:8-9 NRSV) So when Esau saw that the Canaanite women did not please his father Isaac, {9} Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael, and sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

Esau's foreign wives "made life bitter" for his parents, the quiet, godly and non-confrontational Isaac and Rebekah. Just when they should have been celebrating grandchildren they were being deeply hurt. Unbelieving partners often cause real grief to the family of the Christian partner. Their ways are just not Christian ways and Satan, with his control strings attached to their lives, can create pain, hurt and discord through them. Esau also hurt himself, he saw that his wrong marriages hurt his parents and that Jacobs' godly marriage delighted them so in addition to his troublesome wives he went and took believing wives in a sad attempt to win

parental blessing (Genesis 28:8,9). His original wives would have been hurt by this. So Esau's unwise marriages ended up hurting his parents, himself and his wives. Also his choice of believing partner was not altogether politic. He ended up marrying a believer from the family of Ishmael, Isaac's direct rival. Children who foolishly marry unbelievers cause their parents pain.

Reason Seven - Because when God's judgment falls the family will be divided.

(Luke 17:32-34) Remember Lot's wife. {33} Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it. {34} I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other left.

Two on one bed - the believer goes to be with the Lord at the rapture, the unbeliever stays to experience the judgment of God. Why did I include the preceding verses? Because marrying an unbeliever is a form of trying to make your life secure. Its saying "I've got to be married even if it means disobeying God! Or I've got to marry him/her even if it means disobeying God. Eventually, you will lose that partner for eternity. Your security is, in fact, very insecure. But the person who remains single until they marry "in the Lord" will be able to still be with their partner for all eternity (although there are no marriages in heaven there will certainly be much love). Then there is the strange reference to Lot and his mixed up family. Lot's family had spent so long in Sodom that many members of it had absorbed its values (Genesis 19:12-26).

While the New Testament tells us that Lot's soul was tormented day and night by what he saw (2 Peter 2:7.,8) it is clear that this did not rub off on his family. His wife ended up as a pillar of salt and a memorial to the consequences of loving this present world. His two daughters were on the brink of marrying unbelievers. These unbelievers scoffed at angels and perished in the destruction. The daughters had spent so long in Sodom and been so eroded morally by their non-Christian friendships that they later got Lot drunk and committed incest with him. (Genesis 19:30-38). The descendants of this union became the Ammonites and Moabites, perpetual enemies of Israel. When judgment came the family was shattered into fragments because it had joined itself to unbelievers and their ungodly value systems.

Conclusion

So in conclusion there are seven compelling reasons why you should not marry an unbeliever:

1. You are not immune - even the smartest wisest people can be led astray from God by unbelieving partners.
2. There is a fundamental spiritual incompatibility.
3. Because the children may go astray from God.
4. It leads to a lifetime of defeat.
5. Correcting it can result in drastic and painful separations.
6. Because of the pain it causes to other family members.
7. Because when God's judgment falls the family will be divided.

Marrying an unbeliever is not a gray area. It's not something that one Christian can do and another not do. God has said "No" therefore, you do not have a choice. If you are dating an unbeliever you should prayerfully, carefully, and gently end the relationship. If you are attracted to a non-Christian admit your attraction to God and then make sure that the relationship does not develop. If necessary, avoid the person until your feelings subside. Your future marriage is incredibly important. Marry anyone you like, but only in the Lord.

A Christian View of Romance

(Song of Songs 1:1-2 NIV) Solomon's Song of Songs. {2} Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth-- for your love is more delightful than wine.

These first two verses from the Song of Songs flow from the heart of a passionate God. The story of redemption has been called the "divine romance" and that is certainly appropriate. The Church is Christ's bride. Idolatry is adultery. The images of marriage, betrothal and romance are among the best known and deepest analogies to the love of God for His people. God is love and God is romantic.

This clashes with the Deist view of God which sees Him as the detached "clockmaker" who wound up the world and then stood back. That is not the view of Scripture, which speaks of a God who is passionately in love with His Creation. (Hosea 11:8-9 NIV) "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? How can I treat you like Admah? How can I make you like Zeboiim? My heart is changed within me; all my compassion is aroused. {9} I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man-- the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath. God is not dispassionate. He is not "objective" in the sense of being emotionless and cold. He is involved, He loves, He grieves, He feels.

This brings me to the topic of this article - a Christian view of romance. Is it right for Christians to be caught up in love? Is it OK for us to heap extravagant praise on another human being? Or is the perfect Christian a cerebral creature, controlled and exactly fair? Are Christians allowed to exaggerate with the exaggerations of love? Or is exactness the greater virtue? Can we do mad, wild things for love - or does responsibility always take preference? As you may guess I am going to argue for a large-hearted but pure passion. I believe that life is lived primarily from the heart. Things like faith, hope and love are too big to be rational. They are messy. They take us beyond the boundaries of convention, beyond what we can control and beyond what many think is prudent, sensible or wise. Jesus was often thought to be a madman. Paul was told by a king that he had lost his mind. John Wesley was accused of enthusiasm. The early pioneer missionaries were uniformly thought to be quite crazy.

There is an obvious need to make a distinction between the passionate and pure love of God and the passionate love of our husbands or wives. But let's not make too much of a distinction because Scripture sees a very close relationship between loving people and loving God. (1 John 4:20-21 NKJV) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? {21} And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

The Beloved

In every romance there is "the beloved ". Our beloved is God; God's beloved is His Church. In marriage the wife is beloved by the husband and vice-versa. The "beloved" is special. They are beautiful, they are chosen, they are different from any other person. There is no egalitarianism here. A man in love does not treat his beloved as "just another woman". No woman on earth is

her equal. She does not treat him as "just another man" either. Once the beloved is chosen there is an elevation in status that defies reason, fairness or justice and which is pure grace. I feel that I do not deserve the esteem in which I am held by those that have loved me. Neither do I feel that I deserve the esteem in which I am held by God, but this is something He gives willingly. (Ephesians 2:6-7 NKJV) and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, {7} that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

(Song of Songs 2:16 NRSV) My beloved is mine and I am his; he pastures his flock among the lilies. "My beloved is mine and I am his..." that is part of romance. Christian romance is not "open". Real romance does not permit the entry of other lovers. True romance cherishes the beloved to the exclusion of all competition. Romance allows the beloved to "possess" you. As the love expressed in the Song of Songs matures there is a slight but significant reversal of 2:16 in 6:3 (Song of Songs 6:3 NRSV) I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine; he pastures his flock among the lilies. Do you notice the difference? Now she says "I am my beloved's..." first of all. Instead of her joy being first of all in having him as her lover she now rejoices first of all in being his. She has matured. She has surrendered to love.

In the romance between us and God we most often start out with "I have found Jesus" over the years that matures into "Jesus found me". We have a sense of being God's beloved. We realize that He cherishes us. That our love for Him is returned a thousand fold. That He, the God of Heaven, is excited about "little ordinary old me..." To Him I am special. That is what grace means. I am chosen (not because I deserve it), I am special, I am loved. Christian be excited! You are God's and He loves you. He treasures you and adores you. He will keep you as the apple of His eye.

Honor

(1 Peter 3:7 NRSV) Husbands, in the same way, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life – so that nothing may hinder your prayers.

(Song of Songs 5:15-16 NIV) His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars. {16} His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Romance honors the other. It is OK to put your beloved up on a pedestal. I am not advocating silliness or obsession. I am advocating a romantic love that finds the good and which pays attention to it. In Scripture honor is not only from the lesser to the greater but also from the greater to the lesser. The Bible often calls us to honor those who are less powerful than us or poorer than us. We are to honor our wives, our parents, the aged and the elders in the church especially those who teach diligently. In the romantic love of Christ, we are to honor people and to exalt them. Not only should we glorify God but God also wants to glorify us.

(Romans 8:29-30 NKJV) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. {30} Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Mean-spiritedness and cutting down of tall poppies is not a Christian virtue. In fact, God desires to honor people. (John 12:26 NIV) Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. If God is not ashamed to honor us, then we ought not be reluctant to honor one

another. In fact, we are commanded to do so. (Romans 12:10 NKJV) Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.

In romantic love the honor given to the beloved can seem extreme and exaggerated. Even a cursory reading of the Song of Songs astonishes most people. "No-one could be like this" is a common comment. The truth is that no-one is like that except in the eyes of the beloved. When God looks at me He sees someone utterly lovely. You probably would think God daft for thinking that of me. I often don't feel lovely and when I think of myself I don't think "gee I must be attractive to God". That would be almost blasphemous. When God sees His people as lovely it is because He chooses to see them that way. He chooses to honor them. He is fully aware of my faults and sin but that does not deter His passionate love. Because He sees me as lovely then I will become lovely. His love will win the day and I will be "holy and blameless without spot or blemish" when Christ returns. (Ephesians 1:4 NKJV) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Honoring our husband or wife can be quite an extravagant thing. We may have to be parsimonious with money but we need not be parsimonious with praise. Praise is free so we can be free to praise! Solomon heaped praise on his beloved and this was returned. We reap what we sow. Your praise of your partner is the key to your partner wanting to honor you. Harsh critical people often feel they are missing out on the honor and praise they deserve. Less able or less disciplined people seem to get all the rewards. Because harsh critical people do not sow praise and honor, therefore they do not reap it. Instead they are often ignored and condemned, while more positive people who are patient with others and who honor them reap the glory. If you want to be honored, then change your ways and honor others.

Jealousy

(Exodus 34:14 NIV) Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

(Song of Songs 8:6-7 KJV) Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. {7} Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be condemned.

Jealousy is a name and an attribute of God, and it is part of love itself. Jealousy is love's boundary. It is the "electric fence" that keeps out intruders on the covenant. It stops love "being trampled by the neighbor's cattle".

A distinction needs to be made between unreasonable envious petty jealousy and jealousy that is proper to a relationship. Jealousy is meant to defend love and not to destroy it. If jealousy is eroding the marriage and making it into a hostile suspicious battleground, then it is no longer doing its proper job. Jealousy is not good in and of itself. It is only good if and when it protects the covenant relationship. During the 1960's there was a lot of talk of the value of "open marriages," and not being jealous and having multiple partners. As people lost anchorage in the biblical revelation they went and tried new forms of sexual relationship, and the consequences were disastrous. Not even the Almighty is that "open"! Love by its very nature needs the security of a covenant. We need to be able to say "My beloved is mine and I am his, and his banner over me is love."

Jealousy is aroused when someone or something else takes first place in the heart of the beloved. I know of one woman who left her alcoholic husband because "she could not compete

with the bottle." God will not share us with other deities or with "the world." (James 4:4-5 NKJV) Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. {5} Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? Jealousy says "According to our agreement I should be first in your life. These other things should be second, third and last, some of them should not even be there at all". For instance, if a husband is often confiding in another woman who "understands him," then that is improper. This woman is usurping the role of confidant that rightly belongs to his wife. This is a boundary violation, and the wife is not being unreasonable if she asks for it to be corrected. Yes, it is "being jealous" but it is a right and proper jealousy.

Timing

(Song of Songs 2:7 NIV) Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.

(Ecclesiastes 3:8 NIV) a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.

Romance is odd. It has its own timing. We see this with people becoming Christians. We teach and preach and pray and nothing seems to happen for years then one day "for no apparent reason" they get converted and fall in love with Jesus. It is also like falling in love. It is impervious to reason, it cannot be made to happen, but when it does watch out! Love has its time. The Song of Songs tells us not to awaken or arouse love until it pleases, and it says this a number of times in fairly strong terms. Why? Because if we are manipulated into loving someone, it's like they have invaded our innermost being where our deepest and most personal choices are made. Eventually we rebel and the reaction is often quite strong and destructive. The manipulated person tends to feel angry and cold and does not easily forgive. The lesson for most of us is- don't try and create a fire if there is no spark!

When the season for love comes then it is wonderful. The spark becomes a flame very quickly indeed! When I was young I wasted enormous amounts of energy trying to turn good friends into girlfriends. I thought that was the way it "should happen." But love has its seasons and is obstinate. My observation is that if there is a "spark" and a "click" between two people then it is generally there from day one. (With a few exceptions of course.) I am currently of the opinion that if someone is truly "just a good friend" and has been that way for a number of months, then it is unlikely they will ever be anything more. Jacob loved Rachel from day one when he saw her at the well. There was "spark" and romance that endured. He was a one-woman man. Poor Leah, all of Laban's cunning and her own intrigue could not make her the beloved. Love has its time and chooses its object and nothing can budge it.

Sexuality

True romance is always heterosexual. The romance between Christ and the Church is between a bridegroom and His bride. The romance in the Song of Songs is blatantly heterosexual. It celebrates the differences between the genders and rejoices in the sexual act. There is a sense of wonder in the sexual attributes of the other. This is in sharp contrast with the Greek view of love which at times enshrined homosexuality as the ideal. Writings such as Plato's Phaedrus extol the virtues of love between an older man and his teenage male lover. This was so abhorrent to the writers of the New Testament that they never used the common Greek word "eros" to describe Christian love, possibly because of its strong homosexual connotations.

The Hebrew/Christian view of romance is never asexual or homosexual. When love is between people of the same gender it is not romantic love. It is friendship or Christian fellowship and regard. Love between the same gender is "agape" or "phileo", words which generally carry few implications of romance. The Hebrew word for love "ahab" of very broad application similar to the English word love but it never refers to homosexuality. In fact, its context is a covenant that stipulates that homosexuality is clearly sin. (Leviticus 20:13) Less obvious is the fact that true romance is never asexual. It is never unappreciative of sexuality. It does not suppress gender differences and it is rarely politically correct. As the romantic French say "vive la difference" – in other words long live the differences between the sexes! Asexuality is sub-Christian and certainly not part of the Song of Songs!

The celebration of sexuality within the bounds of Scripture and of marriage is an important part of the Christian view of romance. Though the romance begins before marriage with attraction and betrothal it is in the act of marriage that it finds its highest consummation. Sex is not bad. It is very, very good. It is not wrong for a Christian to enjoy sex or to sexually appreciate their husband or wife. If the Song of Songs teaches us anything it teaches us that being appreciative of the sexual side of life is normal and good and can be a very high and beautiful thing to do.

(Song of Songs 7:7-11 NIV) Your stature is like that of the palm, and your breasts like clusters of fruit. {8} I said, "I will climb the palm tree; I will take hold of its fruit." May your breasts be like the clusters of the vine, the fragrance of your breath like apples, {9} and your mouth like the best wine. May the wine go straight to my lover, flowing gently over lips and teeth. {10} I belong to my lover, and his desire is for me. {11} Come, my lover, let us go to the countryside, let us spend the night in the villages.

Privacy

If sexuality is to be celebrated there needs to be privacy, hence the frequent references to "the chamber" in Song of Songs. The deepest recesses of romance are essentially private. The attendants of the bride and bridegroom can see the joy of the couple but they cannot enter the inner chamber with them. Every romance needs a certain amount of "private space" free from intrusion. This includes our romance with God and perhaps is part of the reason that mystics seem to spend so much time alone. The deepest parts of prayer are private. (Matthew 14:23 NKJV) And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

Intimacy develops in the small things and most couples develop a sort of "communication code" of shared jokes and references that only they understand. The core of the marriage eventually becomes a treasure-trove of memories and affections. Even the children do not fully understand it. That is right and proper. Occasionally this boundary is violated and this can happen in two ways. Firstly, it can be overdone so that the couple live in a self-absorbed world of their own and share their joy with no-one. Blessings hoarded soon turn stale and such marriages sometimes become inward, strained and sometimes abusive. The other extreme is that they talk about their intimate affairs with all and sundry. This cheapens and weakens the marriage, eroding basic trust. Who would trust their partner with anything if it will soon become church or town gossip?

This also reflects on sexual restraint before marriage. Why should you admit someone into the most private area of your body and soul if they are just using you for recreation? Surely these things are best saved up for the person you will share them with on a life-long basis. For the person who will treasure them and you.

Final Reflections and a Radical Suggestion

This essay has visited a few of the major stops on the journey called romance, but romance will always remain a mystery. I don't wish to put anyone down when I say this, but I think many of our marriage books in Christian circles make the whole thing far too complicated. One I have finished reading strongly advocates having a support group and therapist! It seems over-complicated and absurd. Here is my radical suggestion. That we stop thinking about relationships and start thinking about people. Yep! I am 100% serious. There is no commandment that says anything like "have a good marriage" The Bible tells me to think about my partner and to love her. That's different. I can control how I treat my partner. I cannot control her response to me. The focus in Scripture is objective not subjective, on the person, not on the state of the relationship. Solomon does not cry out 'what a wonderful relationship we have', instead he says "what a wonderful bride you are!" The focus is primarily on the person, not the relationship.

If we focus on the person everything simplifies very quickly. "What does my partner need today?" becomes the appropriate question. On the other hand, I suspect that focusing on the relationship is in fact a roundabout way of focusing on what we are receiving from it. When I think "our relationship is not good" what I am often thinking is "she is treating me badly today" or something similar. I am focusing on what I am receiving and "fixing the relationship" often means "making sure I get what I want out of it".

While that is a better attitude than ignoring the warning signs it is, in my view, a bit short-sighted and does not properly sow good things into the other person's life. I see romance as centered on the person not on an abstraction called "the relationship". Similarly, we can get bogged down with worry over "our prayer life" when it would be quickly revitalized if we focused on God and in obeying and adoring Him. Focusing on prayer life kills it. Focusing on the Person is life itself! (John 17:3 NIV) Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

May I quickly say that I do not intend the above "radical suggestion" to be a harsh criticism of anyone at all. It is an observation about how tangled and complicated the whole marriage guidance scene has become and reflects my personal desire for a simpler approach. Feel free to think about it and toss it around (or even toss it out).

Romance is at the core of my being and it infiltrates all I do. That I think is right. Romance is not something we do after work. It is the furnace inside us that enables us to work. (Genesis 29:20 NKJV) So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her. I hope that this article has helped you and perhaps intrigued you, into letting romance flow into both your Divine and human relationships.

Sex Before Marriage, Prostitution and STD's

God has designed a Universe that operates on the principal of one sexual partner for life. The following scenarios are forbidden in Scripture.

1. Adultery. (Exodus 20:14, Deuteronomy 22:22)
2. Promiscuity. (Mark 7:21, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Hebrews 13:4)
3. Prostitution. (Leviticus 19:29, 1 Corinthians 6:15,16)
4. Swift remarriage after divorce (serial monogamy). (Matthew 5:27-32)
5. Sex before marriage with a partner other than the intended spouse. (Deuteronomy 22:13-21)
6. Rape of an engaged or married woman where she does not cry out. (Deuteronomy 22:23,24)

The Bible's rule of thumb is that it is the second sexual partner that gets God angriest.

Sex Before Marriage With The Person You Eventually Marry

This leaves the obvious loophole of having sex before marriage with the person you eventually do marry. God's ideal is to be a "pure virgin" on the wedding day. (2 Corinthians 11:2) and this is obviously the aim of the Deuteronomy 22 passage listed above. Sex with a single partner before marriage is only addressed in two places in Scripture that I can find. Seduction of an unengaged virgin is addressed in Exodus 22:16,17 - the penalty is to pay the full bride price and generally marry the girl. Rape of an unengaged virgin requires marriage to take place and the full bride price to be paid. (Deuteronomy 22:28,29) and he may not divorce her ever. The man gets stuck with a hurt, angry woman for life. Thus the penalty for sex before marriage - is marriage. This does not "make it OK" if you do get married later.

Sex before marriage is not God's ideal but neither did He make it a capital offense. If it was, then Satan could have used the Law to carry out his enmity against Christ and have Mary stoned to death for being pregnant before marriage. There is no law against being pregnant before marriage in Scripture, however, from the passages above it is clearly expected that marriage would take place under such circumstances. To use today's legal terminology sex before marriage is a misdemeanor and not a criminal offense - providing it is with the person you eventually marry. With a 50% rate of breakdown for engagements you are taking a huge risk. Many Christians can testify to the extra pain that occurs when a relationship breaks up if there has been significant sexual involvement. The pain is just not worth it. Stick to God's ideal and wait until the wedding day.

Sex Before Marriage As A Recreational Activity Without Any Real Lasting Commitment.

The Bible calls this "harlotry" or "prostitution" and "fornication". It is wrong, wrong, wrong. Little distinction is made between the paid and unpaid versions. In the Mosaic Law it resulted in the death penalty, in the New Testament it prevents entry into the Kingdom of God. Like any sin it can be cleansed and forgiven, but is sin and it is wrong and Christians must not engage in it. The natural penalty God has designed for this is sexually transmitted disease, which is part of that complex of things involved in illicit sex that the bible calls "burning" or "taking fire to one's breast," which denotes the physical pain of the disease, as well as the searing of soul and conscience, and the destruction it wreaks in one's life and relationships.

The church in Corinth had a problem with church members visiting the temple of Aphrodite and having sex with the prostitutes. This is discussed at length in 1 Corinthians 6&7 where the 'agamos' or unmarried were told "it is better to marry than to burn". That is, it is better to have sex in marriage than enter into destructive relationships with prostitutes. The "agamos" were a special group only mentioned at length in this epistle. They are not "parthenoi" or virgins and neither are they widows. Rather they are unmarried but previously sexually active people. That is either divorced or de facto or with a history of promiscuity that was common in that city. Their sexuality was aroused, they felt they couldn't "do without sex," and rather than commit adultery they were using prostitutes to relieve the tension. In the light of this Paul's says "because of immorality each man should have his own wife" a most unusual statement if its talking about virgins getting married.

The Bible normally rejoices in marriage and nowhere else is marriage viewed as a concession or a response to immorality. Paul spends chapter 7 saying how chaste relationships were preferable but if they were not possible then marriage was the proper outlet for their sex drive - this was a concession not a command. Until recently the context of the problem in chapter 6 was not associated with the commands in chapter 7, because the idea of the "agamos" was not common in the churches and church members visiting prostitutes was unthinkable. Not so today, unfortunately. We should find proper marriage partners for the members of our congregations who face the problem of being single with strong sexual urges. Meanwhile those who struggle with temptation should strive to refrain from sex outside of marriage.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases & The Problem of Shame

Sexually transmitted diseases have long been associated with both heterosexual and homosexual promiscuity (Romans 1:18-25). In classical literature it was known as "the fire". An apt term that combines judgment, the pain of the disease and the heat of lust all in one metaphor. Unfortunately, if statistics are anything to go by, perhaps a quarter of any church congregation will have a sexually transmitted disease (known as STD'S).

The disease is acquired during a time of sin and rebellion, but persists into the redeemed life, as many STDs have no known medical cure. This is one of the main contributing reasons for Christians marrying non-Christians as Christians with STDs feel alone and isolated and believe no Christian would marry them. Let me be clear - I do not have and have never had an STD. However, many of my close friends do have them and are deeply ashamed of the fact. They sit at the back of the church and generally only build relationships with the "not so holy" or very accepting people. They feel second class citizens in the Kingdom of God. They see the presence of the disease as indicating God's continuing displeasure with their life. It is also very embarrassing to ask for prayer for healing of an STD, so God is not allowed in and medical science can do nothing. It's a very sad and alienating situation. Here are a few pointers:

1. Your disease is not part of your identity and will not accompany you to heaven, it is not a part of your true self. It dwells in your flesh and will vanish when you die.
2. If you are a repentant Christian God has forgiven the sin that leads to the disease.
3. Your task now is to maintain godly sexual relationships so you do not go back into sin and so "worse does not befall you". Therefore, it is imperative that you identify with where you are going (heaven) rather than where you have come from in your past.
4. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses you from all sin.

5. You are just as much a Christian as anyone else. Paul called the Christians in Corinth "saints".
6. The judgment of God on you has finished but the consequences of that judgment may be with you for some time.
7. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit that God wants to be clean and undefiled therefore He desires to heal you of your disease and restore you to confidence and joy.
8. You should seek God for healing and particularly for mercy and for grace. He is kind and He loves you.

Summary and Conclusion

The Bible forbids all forms of sex before marriage except sex with the person you are going to marry, and even then it is viewed negatively as a falling short of God's ideal of being a pure virgin at the altar. The pain both emotionally and physically and spiritually is intense. Life-long shame can result. However, even in the worst cases God's grace is bigger than our sin, and restoration and forgiveness can overcome much of the damage of the past. While in this life purity may have been lost, in Christ our glory will be restored. In the resurrection all sin and shame will be forgotten, as you and I are transformed in the twinkling of an eye and made glorious, spiritual and pure. I will end with a few verses from 1 Corinthians...

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NASB) Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, {10} nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. {11} And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

6 Answers as To Why Abortion Is Nearly Always Wrong

1. Isn't a Woman Allowed To Do What She Likes With Her Own Body?

Firstly, it's not her body - it's someone else's body! When that woman was inside her own mother she was a separate person from her mother. Very dependent but separate. There are two separate brains, hearts, blood systems, immune systems etc. Mother and child are separate people. The mother is female while the child may be male. The child's body is inside the mother's body, just as a person is inside a room or a person is on a life-support system. A woman has considerable freedom as to what she can do with her own body but she cannot destroy someone else's body, take someone else's life or terminate someone else's destiny. And the child in her womb is not her - it is someone else.

Secondly, we have all sorts of laws about what we can do with our bodies. We are not allowed to take certain drugs, have sex under age and many other things. To stretch a point, most laws seem to relate to what we do with our bodies in some way. We are not allowed to commit suicide, so why should we be allowed to kill a child.

2. But Aren't We Just Removing A "Piece Of Unwanted Tissue"?

Since the use of ultrasound this argument has fallen on hard times. The fetus is a whole human though tiny. It's not a bit of a human body, it's a whole human body with a head, arms, legs, heart, lungs etc. The expression "a piece of unwanted tissue" implies that it is a "piece," that is a fragment like a cancer cell or an ingrown toenail. However, the child in utero is not a "piece" it is a whole - a whole human being. Abortion is not "just removing unwanted tissue," it is taking a whole human life and destiny.

3. An Unwanted Child Has A Terrible Future And Is Better Off Dead.

This argument suffers from several huge flaws:

1. It reasons from the particular to the general. Some unwanted children may have terrible lives but some don't.
2. Unwanted children can become wanted. Many people are longing to adopt a child.
3. Even if they do have a poor childhood they have 60 or so more years to get over it and people do recover.
4. As bad as the future may be for the child, it is better than being hacked to pieces by a D&C operation.

4. What About Cases of Rape or Gross Genetic Abnormality?

Only a tiny minority of abortions are performed for these reasons. Abortion in such is understandable and regrettable. Abortion to save the mother's life may be required in some cases. In such cases there should be a sense of sorrow that the abortion has had to be performed, and it should not be taken lightly. Christians may choose to carry such children to

term as a result of their faith in God, however, people who do not share our faith may take a different option without excessive guilt.

As a counselor the main reasons I have come across for abortions are family pressure and spite – taking revenge against a husband or lover. Then economic and career considerations for the woman come into play. None of these reasons are good enough reasons for taking the life of a perfectly healthy and viable child that someone could love.

5. How Dare You Impose Your Christian Morals On Society!

Law is encoded morality, and that morality comes from the philosophy accepted by the society, various competing philosophies vie for control of the social matrix. Of all the available moralities the Christian code of ethics has stood up well over time and produced groups that function well. It is not so much imposing morals on society as persuading society to adopt the best possible ethical model that is available.

6. So I Suppose You Advocate Shooting Abortion Clinic Doctors?

Quite the contrary. Two wrongs do not make a right. Murder is murder and murder is wrong. I prayed for and reasoned with abortion clinic doctors and have been told that I am "the most reasonable Christian" that they have met. However, I am staunchly opposed to abortion on demand. Also, in logic a mistake in one area does not invalidate an argument in another area. A mistake in Math does not mean you are hopeless at English. To sinfully support killing doctors does not necessarily mean that the arguments against abortion are incorrect. The arguments against abortion are rock solid and even the actions of the most bizarre protestor cannot turn black into white or the reverse.

Adultery of the Heart

(Mat 5:27-32 NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' {28} "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. {29} "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. {30} "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. {31} "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' {32} "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

The Background Scenario

Under the Law a cunning legalist could steal someone's wife and marry her without actually committing adultery. You just wooed her, reduced her affections for her husband until her husband got fed up and divorced her and then you could marry her. Jesus called this adultery of the heart. There seem to be a number of stages involved.

Verse 27 – the injunction concerning adultery.

Verse 28 – the attraction of a man to a married woman.

Verses 29,30 - the command to sever the inappropriate relationship.

Verse 31 – the lax divorce customs of the day.

Verse 32 – the divorce which drives the woman into her lover's arms so that she becomes an adulteress.

Verse 32 – the inappropriate remarriage.

Jesus may have had an incident like the following in His mind when He spoke. In verse 29 a man sees the woman and lusts after her, she is a married woman (gunaika) not a virgin (parthenos), he thus commits adultery with her in his heart. In verses 29& 30 He is told to sever this relationship even though it seems like it is "cutting himself in pieces' '. The man is warned that it is better to sever an inappropriate relationship than wind up in Hell. However, he continues the illicit liaison. He woos her with the intention of getting her to leave her husband for him. He reduces her affections for her husband. Since women generally did not divorce men in those days he had to wait until the husband divorced her.

In verse 31 the husband notices the attraction and using the lax divorce laws of those days angrily divorces her -even though actual adultery had not yet occurred. Jesus does not see this divorce as legitimate because she has not actually yet had sex with the person who is courting her. It is also unwise because the divorce causes the woman to run into her lover's arms and become an adulteress. The two lovers quickly remarry and consummate their union but their consummation is in fact adultery. The context of both the "divorce" verses and the "lusting with one's heart" verses is a fleshly enticement to go beyond the boundaries of emotional faithfulness to one's partner. What is being breached in all three cases - lust, divorce and remarriage are the emotional bonds of the marriage.

The Reasoning

Now to explain some of my reasoning behind this conclusion...

I believe that verse 32 has been mistranslated in most (if not all) English translations. The Greek is difficult to translate because it ends the sentence with a participle and two verbs in a row. The construction is extremely unusual. It's a bit like saying "The dog jumping bites runs" then stopping right there! Here is the Greek sentence... "kai os eav apolelumenen gamese moichatai," its literal translation is "and whoever a being divorced marries commits adultery" (commits adultery is one word in Greek). This is NOTHING like the current English translations. The long translation is probably "he who ensures that a marriage breaks down so that he can marry the woman as soon as she is divorced commits adultery." Now I will explain how I arrive at that conclusion.

The word "gamese" for marriage is used for a man marrying. So it is the man at fault here. Therefore, the person he is marrying is a woman (same sex marriages were not recognized in Jesus day), it is the woman who is "being divorced". So the prohibition is against serial monogamy -jumping out of one marriage into the next. Notice it is the man, not the woman who commits adultery...but he is not the one jumping out of one marriage into the next - the woman is doing that! So how is he at fault? Her husband could have divorced her for all sorts of reasons! He could be dumping her in order to take up with a younger woman! So how is husband number 2 an adulterer? What has he done wrong if he is just loving what someone else has rejected? He can only be an adulterer if he has acted in some way contrary to the original marriage bond.

Husband No.2 wants the woman but does not want to risk getting caught in adultery. He doesn't have an actual sexual affair but he woos her off her husband by reducing her "marital affections" until the marriage bond snaps and he takes her for his own. Though not "legally adultery" it is adultery in every other sense. It is adultery of the heart. Jesus quite rightly prohibits this. This is consistent with his prohibitions on "serial monogamy" – hopping from partner to partner with very little gap in between. This fits in with the context of lusting after a woman in your heart.

Jesus Teaching on Divorce

These verses help complete the picture of Jesus teaching on divorce. Let's summarize it quickly:

1. You cannot divorce your partner except for sexual unfaithfulness. (Matthew 5:31,32, Matthew 19:9)
2. You may not divorce your wife in order to marry a newer model. (Matthew 19:9)
3. Conversely if you were unfaithful and thus were kicked out of the original marriage then remarriage to your lover is just a continuation of the adultery. (Matthew 19:9)
4. If you entice a woman off her husband then marry her it is adultery even if you waited until marriage before you have sex with her. (Matthew 5:32)

In my view Jesus' teaching on divorce says NOTHING about people who are divorced then, sometime later -say at least two to three years - meet someone and marry them. By that time the marriage is irretrievably finished and the person has not left their marriage simply in order to have a sexual relationship with someone else. They have not diminished the affections of the original marriage bond by physical or emotional association with another person, therefore they have not committed adultery. I see them as in much the same position as the "young widows" that Paul strongly advises to marry again. (1 Tim 5:14 NIV) So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander.

It is my observation that divorced but not remarried Christians occasionally fall into sexual sin and some lead disgraceful lives, unable to marry because of their churches teaching on one hand and yet unable to resist their own sinful weakness on the other. It is indeed better to marry than to burn, and I think some churches need to rework their teaching on divorce so that remarriage is permitted, but after a suitable period of time (say 3 years), so that people do not just hop from one partner to the next. I suggest three years because statistics indicate that the failure rate of marriages contracted in the first two years after death or divorce is very high. It also ensures that the second marriage is not an adulterous liaison i.e. that they are not marrying the lover that broke up the first marriage, etc.

The reason for the remarriage of widows (and if I am right - divorcees) has nothing to do with them being happy. Paul's language actually carries a moderate degree of force "I will that they should marry" or "I desire that they should marry". It is not an imperative command but rather a firm request. The concern that younger widows remarry is twofold 1. That they avoid the shame and accusation of sexual sin. 2. That they avoid the welfare mentality and an idle lifestyle where they go house to house gossiping. Paul, Jewish tradition and the OT concur in that productivity from both men and women was held as a high virtue. Idleness and promiscuity give huge amounts of ground for the devil to accuse God's people - and none more so than today. The devil will have far less grounds for accusation if "younger widows" remarry, get off welfare, and live productive lives.

Pastoral Application

Churches need to be able to say to people "This is an inappropriate friendship. We know you have not slept with each other but you are too close, back off, this is adultery of the heart." Many marriages would be saved if we gave stern straight teaching on inappropriate relationships. If a friendship is reducing your affections for your partner or coming into the emotional space you normally reserve for your partner then it is an inappropriate friendship - even if it is with your pastor, Sunday School teacher or counselor. If you start to get a "zing" when you are near that person, or you look forward to meeting them more than you do your own spouse, or you have sexual fantasies about them - then run. It is better to break off a wrong relationship than to wind up in Hell.

Secondly, churches should not sanction those remarriages that have resulted from affairs or from "adultery of the heart". Churches must protect the sanctity of marriage. Let the State marry those people.

Thirdly, churches should remarry, with a clear conscience, people who after a suitable period of time on their own (and chaste while single) have found a partner.

The first two recommendations may seem overly harsh while the last may be contentious for some. I think I have the interpretation right – so that it makes moral, pastoral and exegetical sense, but I leave it with you for consideration, well aware that differences of opinion will exist.

What the Bible Says About Homosexuality

A perspective statement: The Bible calls us to see ourselves in these lights 1) In the light of God's holiness in which "there is none righteous, no, not one". (Romans 3:10) 2) In the light of God's mercy - "for God has bound over all men to disobedience that He might have mercy on them all." (Romans 11:32) 3) In the light of His salvation - "and that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor 6:11). The homosexual is a sinner, on whom God wishes to bestow mercy, and to bring to the point of salvation and the process of sanctification.

There has been a lot of controversy over the sin of homosexuality with a large lobby pressuring Christians not to call homosexuality a sin but to see it as a "valid alternative lifestyle". In reaction to this, and I must say generally in "over-reaction" to it, there has been a scathing and hostile denunciation of homosexuality by certain Christian leaders. In order to help you think through this issue I have collected all the Scripture references I could find, and given a brief comment on their meaning, and summarized it toward the end. I have not touched on the specifics of pastoral application. This article is long enough and the pastoral approach should be basically the same as that for any life-dominating sin.

Homosexual Lusts

(Romans 1:26-28 NKJV) For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. {27} Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. {28} And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

Note: Homosexual lusts, both female and male are called "vile passions" "against nature" and "not fitting".

Homosexual Acts

(1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJV) Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, {10} nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. {11} And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

(Leviticus 18:22 NKJV) 'You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.

(Leviticus 20:13 NKJV) 'If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

(1 Timothy 1:9-11 NRSV) This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, {10} fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching {11} that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

Note: The concept here is that of homosexual genital intercourse. The O.T defines this as "you shall not lie with a male as with a woman" calls it an abomination and prescribes the death penalty. In the NT homosexuality is listed among the major acts of law-breaking and those who commit homosexual acts cannot inherit the kingdom of God. However, hope is held out in that the repentant homosexual can be "washed, sanctified and justified" - free of condemnation just like any other believing church member (1 Cor 6:11).

Male Homosexual Prostitution

(Deuteronomy 23:17,18 NIV) None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute. {18} You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a male prostitute into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

(1 Kings 14:24 NRSV) there were also male temple prostitutes in the land. They committed all the abominations of the nations that the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

(1 Kings 15:12 NRSV) He put away the male temple prostitutes out of the land, and removed all the idols that his ancestors had made.

(1 Kings 22:46 NRSV) The remnant of the male temple prostitutes who were still in the land in the days of his father Asa, he exterminated.

(2 Kings 23:7 NRSV) He broke down the houses of the male temple prostitutes that were in the house of the LORD, where the women did weaving for Asherah.

Note: During the apostasy of Israel ritual prostitution became common and part of the ceremonies associated with the pagan religions that largely took over from YHWH worship at that time. Temple prostitutes were forbidden in the law. Their establishment by some kings was seen as a great act of wickedness and the extermination of these homosexual prostitutes as an act of righteousness. The condemnation was partly because they helped promote idolatry and partly because they were homosexual.

Effeminacy and the "Gay Lifestyle"

(Deuteronomy 22:5 NKJV) "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.

Note: Cross-dressing and the camp lifestyle are displeasing to God.

Homosexual Communities

(Genesis 19:1-11 NRSV) The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed down with his face to the ground. {2} He said, "Please, my lords, turn aside to your servant's house and spend

the night, and wash your feet; then you can rise early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the square." {3} But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. {4} But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; {5} and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, so that we may know them." {6} Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, {7} and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. {8} Look, I have two daughters who have not known a man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." {9} But they replied, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near the door to break it down. {10} But the men inside reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. {11} And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.

[Later on in that chapter... (Genesis 19:22-28 NRSV) Hurry, escape there, for I can do nothing until you arrive there." Therefore the city was called Zoar. {23} The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zoar. {24} Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven; {25} and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. {26} But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. {27} Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD; {28} and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the Plain and saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace.]

(Judges 19:22-25 NRSV) While they were enjoying themselves, the men of the city, a perverse lot, surrounded the house, and started pounding on the door. They said to the old man, the master of the house, "Bring out the man who came into your house, so that we may have intercourse with him." {23} And the man, the master of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Since this man is my guest, do not do this vile thing. {24} Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out now. Ravish them and do whatever you want to them; but against this man do not do such a vile thing." {25} But the men would not listen to him. So the man seized his concubine, and put her out to them. They wantonly raped her, and abused her all through the night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go.

[Later that chapter and the next... (Judges 19:30 - 20:11 NKJV) And so it was that all who saw it said, "No such deed has been done or seen from the day that the children of Israel came up from the land of Egypt until this day. Consider it, confer, and speak up!" So all the children of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, as well as from the land of Gilead, and the congregation gathered together as one man before the LORD at Mizpah. {2} And the leaders of all the people, all the tribes of Israel, presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God, four hundred thousand foot soldiers who drew the sword. {3} (Now the children of Benjamin heard that the children of Israel had gone up to Mizpah.) Then the children of Israel said, "Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?" {4} So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, "My concubine and I went into Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, to spend the night. {5} "And the men of Gibeah rose against me, and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me, but instead they ravished my concubine so that she died. {6} "So I took hold of my concubine, cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the territory of the inheritance of Israel, because they committed lewdness and

outrage in Israel. {7} "Look! All of you are children of Israel; give your advice and counsel here and now!" {8} So all the people arose as one man, saying, "None of us will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house; {9} "but now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah: We will go up against it by lot. {10} "We will take ten men out of every hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, a hundred out of every thousand, and a thousand out of every ten thousand, to make provisions for the people, that when they come to Gibeah in Benjamin, they may repay all the vileness that they have done in Israel." {11} So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man... (The city was eventually totally destroyed and everyone in it killed)]

Note: Both these homosexual communities became so enmeshed in homosexual lust that homosexual rape was accepted as a part of their communal lifestyle. It had reached the point where there was no contrition for actions of violence towards strangers including group rape and insistence on homosexual intercourse with visitors. Such aggressively homosexual communities incurred firstly God's direct judgment (Sodom and Gomorrah) and secondly His judgment mediated through the courts of Israel (Gibeah).

Summary

Homosexual actions, lusts, and lifestyle are seen as unsuitable for Christians and wrong in God's sight. Both lesbianism and homosexuality are included in Scriptures condemnation. The more outrageous forms of homosexuality such as homosexual prostitution and homosexual communities consumed by homosexual lusts bring direct judgment from God. Homosexual lusts are seen as a sign that a person has departed far from God and are normally judged by God in two ways: 1) A darkening of the mind and spirit. 2) Disease "receiving the due penalty (death) in their bodies..." (Romans 1:26-28). Homosexual actions are seen as being among the great crimes such as slave trading, con-artistry and murder. (1 Timothy 1:8-11). Therefore, homosexuality is out of place for the Christian. However, homosexuals are not beyond the reach of God's salvation and they can be redeemed, washed, sanctified and justified like everyone else upon repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38-40).

A Biblical Response to Same Sex Marriage

This article will look at the main biblical data concerning same sex marriages and will conclude that no church that takes the Bible seriously can sanction a union between homosexuals or lesbians.

God's Order for Sexuality - The Argument from Design

(Genesis 1:27 NKJV) So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

(Genesis 2:18-25 NKJV) And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." {19} Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. {20} So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. {21} And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. {22} Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. {23} And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." {24} Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. {25} And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

The image of God is both male and female and is reflected in a godly union between male and female where the creative power of God, His life-giving, His self-giving and His moral nature are perfectly expressed. This is only possible in a heterosexual union. When God created a partner for Adam He created Eve - not another Adam. This means that perfect partnership requires some level of difference, as well as a level of similarity so great that Adam could cry out loudly "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh". Heterosexuality is the normal method of human bonding and the one for which our bodies and emotions are designed.

If God had intended the human race to be fulfilled through both heterosexual and homosexual marriage He would have designed our bodies to allow reproduction through both means and made both means of sexual intercourse healthy and natural. Homosexual anal intercourse carries a high risk of disease; this is recognized in Scripture where gay men are said to "receive in their bodies the due penalty for their error". Only 1% of homosexuals die of old age.

What Jesus Taught

(Matthew 19:4 NKJV) And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'

(Mark 10:6 NKJV) "But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.'

When Jesus was asked questions about marriage he went straight back to the defining passages in Genesis that say that marriage is between male and female and is meant to be lifelong. He saw the creation accounts in Genesis as authoritative in His day. And what is authoritative for Jesus is authoritative for Christians also. While Jesus did not specifically teach on homosexuality His establishment of the Genesis passages as the fundamental passages on marriage, (even more fundamental than the Law) leaves no doubt as to the outcome.

The Teaching in the Epistles

(Romans 1:26-27 NKJV) For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. {27} Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

(1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV) Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, {10} nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

(1 Timothy 1:9-10 NKJV) knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, {10} for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,

These three references indicate that homosexual passions and acts are unnatural, shameful, contrary to sound doctrine and deny entrance to the Kingdom of God. This being so they cannot be the basis of a Christian marriage sanctioned by God's Church. The Church exists to save people not to bless the means of their damnation. No marriage can be sanctioned by the Church if the very basis of the marriage involves acts that put the couple outside of eternal salvation. No matter what our society may legislate, the law of God is clear - that a marriage is not a godly marriage if it is a same sex union.

Are Emotions A Sufficient Basis For Marriage?

Hollywood has propagated the myth that when it comes to marriage "all you need is love." This is simply not true. Marriage is not based on emotion any more than any other partnership in life is. Marriage, like many human activities, involves emotion but it is not constituted by the presence of any particular set of emotions. I do not deny that many homosexuals feel deeply for their partners, however, I do assert that no matter how deep the feelings are, what they have is not a marriage in God's sight. It is a beautiful deception. Just because an emotion is deep or powerful does not justify acting upon it. Like drugs, like adultery, like the abuse of alcohol or the love of money, or the power rush of human ego trips there are emotions which are powerful and addictive and ultimately terribly destructive. Same sex marriages must satisfy criteria other than emotion. A marriage is more than a sexual pleasure center. A marriage is a social unit that is interwoven with dozens of other lives. Same sex marriages do not last. Less than 5% of gays have ever had a relationship that lasted 3 years or more. Sex is not enough. Passion cannot sustain an inherently unstable social unit.

Society, the Church and Same Sex Marriages

Marriage is a fundamental social institution that does not exist just for the emotional satisfaction of two individuals but for the greater good of the community which stands under the blessing or curse of God. Societies that put emotional fulfillment before right actions and principles will soon give way to a multitude of addictions and deep corruptions and collapse. God will judge any society that institutes same sex marriages.

I also believe that God will judge a society that permits adoption of children or the use of sperm banks by same sex couples. His Word stands over society and when it is deliberately flaunted in the name of progress and enlightenment then it is not light but deep darkness that results. We cannot bend the principles of God's Word to suit vocal minority groups. While some nations may enact laws permitting these evils the true church of God must stand resolutely firm and never allow the sanctioning of same sex marriages by Christian clergy.

Why Christians Should Take a Stand Against Pornography

This article focuses on the social results of hard-core pornography. These reasons were sent to the Townsville Bulletin as part of a petition to have advertisements for xxx video services removed from the paper. The paper promptly complied and the ads were removed. You may use these reasons as part of any local church based campaign against pornography. The Biblical reasons are not discussed here but are outlined elsewhere. For Biblical reasons against the use of sexual imagery see the following article on sex in advertising.

If you believe that no one was corrupted by a book, you have also to believe that no one was ever improved by a book (or a play or a movie). You have to believe, in other words, that all art is morally trivial and that, consequently, all education is morally irrelevant. (Irving Kristol, Pornography, Obscenity, and the Case for Censorship)

1. There are more outlets for pornography in the United States than McDonald's restaurants. (This is a statistic from the National Coalition Against Pornography.)
2. A child is sexually molested every 47 seconds in the United States. As many as 90% of the abused children questioned revealed that they were shown adult hard-core pornography prior to molestation. (Children's Legal Foundation)
3. Six hundred American males and females of junior high school age and above were interviewed about their 'out-in-real-life involvement with pornography'. It found that 91% of the males and 82% of the females admitted having been exposed to X-rated, hard-core pornography." Two-thirds of the males and 40% of the females reported wanting to try out some of the sexual behaviors they had witnessed. Among high school students, 31% of the males and 18% of the females admitted actually doing some of the things sexually they had seen in the pornography within a few days after exposure.
4. Interviews have revealed that 87% of child molesters admit to regular use of pornography: 77% of all child molesters of boys and 87% of molesters of girls admitted using pornography and imitating the sexual behavior in the pornographic material when they committed their crimes. Death row inmates have admitted that their rape and murder assaults were directly related to years of exposure to pornography.
5. Pornography is a \$3 Billion-a-year business. (FBI statistic)
6. Recently a Canadian study reported that teenagers (ages 12-17) were among the most interested in pornography. Dr. Aaron Hass conducted a study for the UCLA School of Medicine and interviewed some 625 young people. His findings revealed that those in this age group (12-17), were the primary ones pornographers aimed at. Other studies confirmed that more than 46% of American Junior High students were watching X-rated pornographic movies.

What's Wrong With Using Sex to Advertise Things?

This article is a Christian and biblical perspective on the use of sex in advertising. Its aims are: 1) To make Christians uneasy about accepting this as "normal" and OK. 2) To perhaps induce some to write to companies that use inappropriate advertising techniques and to media outlets that offend. 3) To stop Christians in the advertising industry unthinkingly using sexual imagery to promote their products. The central authority appealed to in this article will be the Bible.

I have found 12 good biblical reasons why the use of sex in advertising is wrong, they are:

1. Sex in advertising treats the human body as just another commodity and thus reinforces the dictum that the material world is 'all there is'. People, in this view, are merely objects, participators in the marketing scheme. They are valued not for their kindness, integrity, competence or character but for how they look through a camera lens alone. This is demeaning in the extreme and a profanation of the dignity of the human person and of all universally held spiritual values. The body of a Christian is not valuable because of its photographic value but because Jesus indwells it. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NKJV) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? {20} For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

2. Man and woman are made in the image of God which includes their physical being in some way (Genesis 2:7). This image is to be treated with respect and it is clearly a sin to behold others' nakedness. (Genesis 9:22,23)

3. Even though Adam and Eve were originally both naked and not ashamed (Genesis 2:25) in a fallen world with corrupt desires the display of nakedness is shameful. (Genesis 3:7-10, Isaiah 47:3) Hence God gave Adam and Eve adequate and strong clothes. (Genesis 3:21) Sex in advertising - particularly the use of semi or full nudity is thus shameful and unbiblical.

4. To look lustfully on a woman is adultery of the heart. (Matthew 5:27-29 NKJV) "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' {28} "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. {29} "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

5. While some may argue that "there is nothing wrong with it" and "to the pure all things are pure" Jesus does not treat adultery of the heart so lightly but condemns it as a practice that will cause "your whole body to be cast into Hell." The advertiser is causing others to seriously stumble in their Christian walk. Of this Jesus says (Mark 9:42 NKJV) "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.

6. Sex in advertising is a form of unconsummated prostitution. The premise is "If you pay the money (buy the product) you get the girl". Prostitution is always condemned in Scripture. (Leviticus 19:29 NKJV) 'Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness.' Observe Western society - cannot some of the abundance of wickedness be traced to the unleashing of vast amounts of sexual temptation through the media? Have we "prostituted our daughters" for the sake of trade?

7. Our thinking is of paramount importance since that is primarily where the Spirit of God touches us. The unrighteous man is asked to forsake his thoughts (Isaiah 55:7 NKJV) "Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." And the Christian is exhorted to fix their minds on things above. (Colossians 3:2-3 NKJV)"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. {3} For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." The law of "you reap what you sow" or "garbage in, garbage out" applies to the mind as well. The use of sex in advertising is an invitation for us to fix our minds on fleshly, carnal and greedy things. It is designed to induce us to think unrighteously. This would not be so bad if it could be easily avoided by the Christian. However, our culture's visual environment is saturated with it – particularly here in Australia.

8. The ubiquity of sex in advertising is an assault on religious freedom of choice. Christians, Muslims, Jews and Bahai's are amongst many religions that find the use of sex in advertising morally offensive and a violation of their principles. Those religions that emphasize having a pure thought life free from unwanted intrusions do not appreciate being bombarded by semi-erotic pictures through every available medium.

9. Psychologists have found that the human mind cannot distinguish between a sufficiently vivid fantasy and reality. This discovery has been used for constructive purposes in the visualization and "rehearsal" techniques developed for sportsmen. However, it has also been used for evil and nearly every major serial killer fed their mind on large doses of pornography and violence, mentally fantasizing and rehearsing their actions, before they committed their crimes. Given the great power of human visualization we must use it wisely and control the images we create in our minds. Jesus said (Matthew 6:22-23 NKJV) "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. {23} "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore, the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" Sex in advertising puts false and destructive images before the eyes of men and women. Women who "see" the impossibly thin models of the magazines as "standard" are often tormented by deep feelings of physical inferiority and drive themselves with unrealistic expectations. Many become bulimic or even anorexic as a result. Some die.

10. Sex in advertising aims to produce a covetous consumer. Arousing a fundamental and hence powerful appetite and associating it strongly with a material product produces a strongly reinforced desire to obtain that product. This desire operates not only at the rational level of intelligent purchasing but at the covetous "gut level" of greedy desire. Thus sex in advertising aims to subvert the operation of intelligent disciplined purchasing and replace it with instinctual level impulse buying and coveting. For the Christian, or even for the person of wisdom, this is clearly wrong. (Exodus 20:17 NKJV) "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." OR (Matthew 6:19-21 NKJV) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; {20} "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys

and where thieves do not break in and steal. {21} "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." OR (Colossians 3:5-6 NKJV) Therefore, put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. {6} Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

11. Sex in advertising generally involves lying about the nature of the product. Beautiful women do NOT accompany the purchase of a car or computer or a bar of soap. These products often do little or nothing to increase one's attractiveness. The implied increase in sex appeal is false. To associate erotic value with a product that has none is similar to saying that the product has a certain feature when it patently does not. The Scriptures are quite clear about condemning the use of deception at any level. (Proverbs 12:22 NKJV) Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully are His delight.

12. The process of producing sexually oriented advertisements often involves values and actions that are morally repulsive to the Christian. The photographing of nude models, not even for art, but for commercial gain should repel the conscience of any Spirit-filled Christian photographer. The auditioning process also has a marked reputation for sleaziness. The making of an advertisement involves a desensitizing of the conscience of the photographer, the model/s, the advertising agency and the media as well as the company that the ads are for. There must be hundreds of minor and major moral compromises behind every such advertisement. (Proverbs 28:6 NKJV) Better is the poor who walks in his integrity Than one perverse in his ways, though he be rich. (Proverbs 10:9 NKJV) He who walks with integrity walks securely, But he who perverts his ways will become known.

Summary

The use of sex in advertising is not innocent marketing. It is a major and widespread defilement of the human person. It is "trade in souls". Fellow Christians, it is time we spoke out. We need to write to manufacturers, particularly those who are believers, and ask them to refrain from using sex in advertising. We need to form high quality, ethical, Christian advertising agencies that market products skillfully but decently. Write to your media standards association, your newspapers and your TV stations and let them know your views. Where possible use your power as a consumer to avoid buying products that use sex in advertising. We can roll back the tide for God is with us. Pray, unite and ACT.

Here is a suggested letter you can use.

Dear Manufacturer,

I have noticed that your product "No. 1 Widget "is advertised using human nudity as a major selling point. I believe this is untruthful regarding the nature of the product and a defilement of the women involved in making that advertisement. As a Christian I find my religious beliefs affronted by your advertisement. I will not buy your product as long as this ad is used to sell it.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Bloggs