

## QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

**88.4 What Does the Bible Say About the Causes of Marital Unhappiness?****Part IV**

*Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8*

A spokesman for the National Marriage Guidance Council in Britain reported last week that sex, not money, has taken over as the major marital problem for couples seeking marriage guidance in that country. Mr. Nicholas Tyndall, representing the council, described the situation in this way, "Couples are told they ought to have a good full and active sex life. They believe that, and it doesn't happen to them, they want to know what to do about it. They say that they are not achieving a successful sexual performance and it is affecting the stability of their marriages. More than half of the couples who seek marital guidance complain about other defects in their partners, but frequently the root cause is sexual incompatibility."

We have talked about this problem, the fact that marital difficulties may not always begin with sex, but that sex can play an important role in the breakdown of the relationship. For some, the song of love has become the most unhappy song of all. The Christian teaching is that many people are bewildered and unfulfilled sexually because they view sex from a wrong perspective to begin with. Their sexuality is thus abused and misused. A person who understands what the Bible has to say about sex goes a long way toward achieving the satisfaction which is desired from this strong and significant urge. The Biblical basis for sex has led us to consider the fact that our identity as persons is primary, that God has woven sexuality into the fabric of human relationships, that rebellion against God has brought a faulty view of sex, that sexual fulfillment can only be found in an atmosphere of trust, and that sexual relationships outside of marriage are forbidden and costly. Today I would like to comment further on sexual relationships outside of marriage and then to view some additional principles which can be drawn from Scripture concerning sexual activity.

### **XIII. SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE ARE FORBIDDEN AND COSTLY:**

These relationships differ, but are considered illicit by anyone who takes the Bible seriously. At least four kinds of relationships are spoken of in the Bible under the words adultery, fornication, harlotry and sodomy. These activities are an encroachment upon the special relationship God has planned for a man and a woman. Adultery and harlotry are actually multiplied marriage relationships. Inasmuch as sexual intercourse is more than a physical act, but involves the total person, it is a **one of a kind** relationship because there isn't anything left over for anyone else without stealing from the **one of a kind** relationship.

This principle that *"two shall become one"* is mentioned many times in the Bible and is the way God has structured marital togetherness. Whatever takes away from this one of a kind relationship is wrong in God's eyes. It is possible to have only one union of this kind going at once. Scripture emphatically teaches this "oneness" thereby condemning adultery and harlotry. Some verses worth referring to are Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; I Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31. There should not be any question about the lack of propriety concerning these acts. The adulterer was put to death in Levitical times (Lev. 20:10) and Jesus elevated the standard to include intentions (Matthew 5:27-28). He thought very highly of the unique "one of a kind" relationship and sought to protect it. The Apostle Paul called adultery one of the evil deeds of the flesh in Galatians 5:19 and John the Apostle consigned to the lake of fire those who were involved with it. (Revelation 21:8) This certainly has to be one of the costly aspects of such an act.

As far as fornication is concerned, the Jerusalem Christians in Acts 15 were admonished by the visiting apostles to abstain (15:20). Paul urged Corinthian believers to flee it (I Corinthians 6:13; 18) and told the Ephesians it should not be named among them. (Ephesians 5:3) Fornication is understood to mean sexual relations where one of the parties is married. Again, it is a violation of the monogamous ideal God planned when He made the sexual instinct.

Homosexuality is the sexual stimulation of one's own sex. For the life of me I cannot understand how people who know what the Bible teaches concerning this attraction for one's own sex, can claim to have a relationship with Christ. It would seem to me that spiritual life within would bring heavy conviction and would lead one to depend upon the Lord to control such a sexual appetite

whatever the cause may be. It was called sodomy in the Old Testament and was a sin for which God destroyed Sodom. (Genesis 19:5-8; 24) Sodomite could be a member of the house of Israel. (Deuteronomy 23:17) There are other references in the Old Testament to this sin. (I Kings 15:12; Isa. 3:9; Ezekiel 16:46) The New Testament is equally adamant. (Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9) God's view is that you are not supposed to arrange a husband and wife relationship between two people of the same sex. It has been suggested that the relationship between David and Jonathan may have been a Biblical example of acceptable homosexuality. There is not one clue anywhere that such a thing was true. Theirs was a warm human friendship, doubtless intimate, but without unnatural sexual advances. I certainly hope we haven't come to the place where we no longer believe such a thing is possible. (I Samuel 18:1)

The sins of adultery, harlotry, fornication and homosexuality are condemned in the Bible. They are marital relations outside of marriage. They are a temporary coming together in a way which God has designed should be a life long way. They destroy the "one of a kind" closed framework of love God wanted by reducing sex to the pleasurable level only. For those who are guilty of reducing what God made so good and beautiful to the level of lust, God offers forgiveness and cleansing. God will forgive the past. I suppose we are all guilty of the sin of impurity in some way, I am thinking of thoughts which we have entertained. But Jesus Christ came into this world to bring forgiveness, God's forgiveness to our lives. If your life has been so marred, confess your sin, ask cleansing on the ground of Jesus' death on the cross, read Psalm 51 and claim its truth for your own life.

Let me say just one word concerning homosexuality and lesbianism (female homosexuality). These tendencies are largely the result of abnormal personality development which may have any number of causes ranging from glandular imbalance and certain genetic causes to dominant parents or an unnatural relationship with a parent of the same sex. These tendencies are not sin in themselves, to have this inability to relate to others is not sin, but the practice of these things God forbids. Help can be obtained. I Corinthians 6:9-11 makes it plain that Jesus Christ and the mighty Holy Spirit can effect change. Also, psychologists have been very successful in bringing about the desired adjustments through Christ centered therapy. Christian counselors will provide a non-critical atmosphere, help should be sought from them.

#### **XIV. SEXUAL URGES ARE VERY STRONG AND ARE TO BE SATISFIED IN MARRIAGE:**

While it is not necessary for a person to marry, it is the most natural thing to do. Jesus made it plain that a person may remain single for several reasons and do so honorably before God. Matthew 19:12 speaks of those who are unsexed naturally and those who chose to be. I believe that God has the gift of self-control for such persons who accept the place of remaining single for the work of God's Kingdom. Otherwise, this powerful desire requires satisfaction. It must be controlled and directed toward worthy ends or there is no end to the heartache so strong an urge can bring. The way God has chosen to channel this potential given to us is through marriage. I believe this is the primary meaning of I Corinthians 7:3-9. The teaching here is that both parties are to provide the satisfaction which will offset unfulfilled sexual desires which Paul suggests by the use of the word "burn." (7:9) The Living Bible translates verses 3-4 in this way and the truth is readily understood, *"The man should give his wife all that is her right as a married woman, and the wife should do the same for her husband...So do not refuse these rights to each other."* There are many people who live in sexual deprivation because this principle is not followed. Bearing in mind the Christian virtues of moderation and consideration for the other party, failure to honor genuine needs constitute a kind of robbery unless there is agreement. Christian sexual love is on an equal basis and the responsibility is a mutual one. (7:3) Whatever the pull and pleasures of sex may be, God's way of controlling them is marriage.

#### **XV. THERE IS A THREEFOLD REASON FOR SEX IN MARRIAGE:**

We are all aware that there is a great deal more to marriage than sex. Yet sex, if all we have been saying is true, is the element which makes our marriage different from every other continuing human relationship. When it comes to understanding our sexuality it is so easy to become confused before all that is being written and said about the relationship of male and female persons. According to the Christian view of sex, there are three factors involved in God making us the way He did, that is the way He wove sexuality into our nature.

**First**, there is the **unifying** factor. It is a way to draw two human beings to one another which is going to give them an understanding of one another which is exclusive. Monogamous marriage is the only way to have such a "one of a kind" experience of another person where in an atmosphere of trust there is complete

self-giving. If it is true we are drawn to people we have something in common with, how close shall we be drawn to the person with whom we have something in common which no one else has? Sexual relations are not what one does only, they are what one is. They crystallize married love so that two become as one.

**Secondly**, there is the **satisfying** factor. The second positive factor regarding sexual activity within marriage is that of enjoyment. Pleasure in sexual relations is assumed from such passages as Proverbs 5:18-19 and Genesis 1:27; 31. In whatever way we are to understand the male and female creation as being good surely the physical sensations made possible by this diversity are included.

**Thirdly**, the **multiplying** factor is important. In fact, that is what the first man and woman were told to do, "*multiply*" and "*fill*" the earth. (Genesis 1:28) Human sexuality is the means that human beings come into this world who will never die, who are made in the image of God.

#### **XVI. SOME PEOPLE DO NOT RESPOND SEXUALLY TO THEIR MATES AND SHOULD SEEK HELP:**

This inability on the part of the woman is called frigidity and in the case of the male it is impotence. These are maladjustments which can arise from a variety of causes. The severity of these conditions ranges from little sexual functioning to complete revulsion. It is important to understand that incompatibility of this kind may be physical, but very often can be traced to deep emotional disturbances. Things like hostility, resentment, fear of inadequacy, distorted sexual attitudes, conflicting affections, unfortunate childhood experiences are causes of unresponsiveness. Now, the society in which we live cares little when the church speaks about sex, but I find it very interesting that it is very often the church which reaps and inherits the problems of those who thought they could live by a morality and lifestyle which contradicts all that Jesus and the apostles taught concerning the nobility of this instinct, and how to live with people in this world. My concern here is to help. I will do it with the words of Dr. James H. Jauncey who writes concerning the sexually unresponsive, "Expert help is needed in such cases. In the first instance a woman should go to her physician who may advise psychiatric help. It is useless to attempt do-it-yourself psychiatry. You may not like going to a specialist in such a situation, but it is infinitely better than remaining a sexual cripple all your life. Impotence in men may have similar causes to that of frigidity in women. But congenital or physical causes are much more prominent. It is a particularly galling experience for

a man to have to admit to a woman that he is impotent. He should see a psychiatrist by all means. Every person who finds himself married to a totally sexually inadequate partner should demand that psychiatric help be obtained. I can't say that this will necessarily effect a cure. Such problems are difficult to cure and sometimes impossible. But many cases can be cured, so it is worth a try." (**Magic in Marriage**; Zondervan; pp 43)

#### **XVII. SEX HAS A SACRED MEANING FOR THE COMMITTED CHRISTIAN:**

The informed believer knows that the marital union between one man and woman, which is brought about by sex, is a type of mystical union each believer has with Christ. (Ephesians 5:32) Let me say here that from the view of Scripture there is no such thing as premarital sexual intercourse. Marriage happens when bodies are joined in this way. This is heavy teaching but I know of no other way to understand Paul in I Corinthians 6:16, *"Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her?"* He then quotes the Scripture which says, *"The two shall become one."* Engaged people should guard themselves or become married legally if they have failed to do so, because they are already married in God's sight. (I Corinthians 7:36-37) We have talked about adultery and harlotry, but I did not mention at the time that these are illegitimate marriages outside the confines of a life-long union. The first reference we have in Scripture having to do with marriage speaks of the man and woman becoming "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24), the suggestion is that their bodies were joined and they became married in God's sight.

If sexual union creates a marriage in God's sight, and marriage typifies the relationship of Christ and His Church, it becomes all the more plain that we should consider sex as something holy, pure, and clean. Anything which typifies our union with Christ must be considered with the utmost reverence. How easy it is to succumb to the influences about us as sex is dragged into the gutter and treated in such a disrespectful way. The next time we are tempted, or put into a position to regard it lightly, let us reflect upon some of the things we have been thinking upon here, that the Christian view of sex is a lofty and a serious one and that God is pleased, He is always pleased, when we are willing to see things His way.

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