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CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE
Lesson 6
Premarital Sex and Marriage

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We are living in the most sexually permissive generation in the history of mankind. There is a pill to prevent pregnancy and antibiotics to ward off venereal disease. Many question whether marriage is any longer necessary for making sex legitimate. The AIDS epidemic has at least caused some to stop and think about premarital and extramarital sex as dangerous and the value of monogamous relationships. They take this position not because they think sex is wrong, but that it may be life threatening.
- B. Our promiscuous society is challenging the very institution of marriage and the Christian ethic of premarital and marital chastity. It is no secret that many couples are living together in what is called an “unstructured relationship” and this seems to be the wave of the future.
- C. The new morality of premarital co-habitation is nothing more than premarital sexual activity accepted as the norm. This new sex morality (which is nothing less than old sexual immorality) not only affects college students and singles, but also high school and even junior high kids. Even senior citizens get into the act. Television has left us with the impression that “everybody is doing it” so why be different.
- D. The popular cry of the hour is that it does not make much difference whether or not you involve yourself in premarital sex so long as you do not hurt anyone. The slogan is, “I have rights and one of those rights is to have sex with whom I please. I have rights to sexual pleasure and no one can take these rights from me.” There are still many who would wholeheartedly approve of sex in a “meaningful relationship.” The Christian ethics of “You shall not commit adultery” and “Flee sexual immorality” have been cast aside as irrelevant for the scientific, progressive twenty-first century. The tragedy is that most religious leaders either accept the new morality or go along with it so as not to offend people.
- E. The result of the new morality is that some people have consciously concluded that marriage is obsolete and a thing of the past, but far worse many more are subconsciously assenting to the new morality, accepting relativism in sexuality as a fact of life. Surely this is the major reason people are putting off marriage until their thirties.
- F. The new morality is really only the old morality brought up to date. There is nothing new about it for sin has been with us since Adam and Eve, and as long as men refuse to relate themselves to God through Christ, then they will continue to pervert the concept of sex.
- G. The new morality of sex has rubbed off on many young people from Christian homes. Therefore, we Christians better have Biblical, logical and practical answers for what we believe or our children will shove our thinking aside as archaic, old-fashioned and part of the old establishment which is passing away for the new world order.

II. WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

A. Human Reasoning. Before we can convince men of the Biblical viewpoint of marriage, we must show them why marriage is important and when it takes place. People often say, “Why should I wait for marriage to have sex?” or “What difference can a few words of a preacher or judge do to change my feelings towards my partner?” or “Isn’t my commitment in my heart before God more important than a public commitment?” or “Isn’t living together as meaningful as marriage?” In light of these questions, we need to examine marriage from a Biblical, practical and legal viewpoint.

B. Marriage is a Covenant.

1. The Bible states clearly that marriage is a covenant between two people.

“Another thing you do: You flood the Lord’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, ‘Why?’ It is because the Lord is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. ‘I hate divorce,’ says the Lord God of Israel.” (Mal. 2:13-16a; Mark. 10: 6-9).

2. Marriage is first of all a covenant before God and then to one another to be faithful. Legally, in the eyes of the state, there are civil marriages and common law marriages, and while these may be approved by God as marriages of the state, they are not Christian marriages.

Christian marriage is a voluntary agreement by two people who are mutually attracted to one another and who have a similar faith in Jesus Christ, to become “one” in Christ, whereby they commit to one another before God that they will give of themselves faithfully to one another, establish a Christian home and raise children for the glory of God.

Basically, the Christian view of marriage is not that it primarily or even essentially is a binding legal and social contract. The Christian understands marriage as a covenant made under God and in the presence of fellow members of the Christian family. Such a pledge endures because an unconditional covenant has been made. A covenant more solemn, more binding, more permanent than any legal contract.

Those who pledge such a covenant before God hold that God Himself has been called as witness to their act, God Himself has joined them together, and “what God has joined together, they will not let man put asunder.” This is not to say that such covenants are never violated, can never collapse, and will never be broken. They can and are, else God would not have issued the warning, “Let not man put asunder.” But those commit themselves in awareness of the Eternal witness recognize the open-ended promise to be faithful as long as life allows (D.W. Augsburger, Cherishable).

- C. Marriage is a Commitment. There is more to marriage than a union of two bodies; there is the commitment of two wills to one another. Since marriage is a total communion which thrives only within a context of security, its highest and richest possibilities ought to be safeguarded by the postponement of sex until two lives can be fully shared, publicly and proudly, without secrecy and subterfuge and shame. When the question arises, “I love her so why wait for sexual intercourse?” the question needs to be reversed. If you love her (or him), why not wait for marriage? And the only honest reply would be, “Because I don’t want to wait.” This proves the person does not love a potential partner enough to commit irrevocably in marriage before intercourse.

III. WHY SEX

A. The Created Order.

1. God is the creator of men and He designed man’s body with all its drives and emotion. God thought up the sex act so that a man and a woman in the bond of marriage could express the highest kind of human love in oneness.
2. Sex is not evil or dirty, but is holy, right and good, and God wants men to enjoy this act. But God, who created the sex act, also laid down the rules for the proper use of this God-given bodily function.
3. Sex is for the marriage union only. God is pro-sex and wants people to enjoy it thoroughly in marriage.

“The Bible makes plain that evil, when related to sex, means not the use of something inherently corrupt, but the misuse of something pure and good. It teaches clearly that sex can be a wonderful servant, but a terrible master; that it can be a creative force more powerful than any other in the fostering of love, companionship, happiness--or it can be the most destructive of all life’s forces.” (Billy Graham, What the Bible Says About Sex)

- B. The Fallen Order. God has made sex something good, but man, because he is tainted by sin in all his acts, distorts and perverts the true meaning of sex, making it something dirty or evil.

C. The Redeemed Order.

1. The Christian standard for sexual morality is based upon the teaching of the Bible and is for Christian people only. Non-Christians often think of Christians as unsophisticated, prudish and backward. Yet, Christians stand upon the Bible, the only rule of faith and practice, and live a Christian ethic as redeemed people because it pleases God and in the long run will bring much earthly blessing.

The “thou shalt nots” of Scripture are not pious prohibitions aimed at taking all the joy out of life; they are signposts set by God Himself to protect our happiness and to help make our life’s journey as tragedy-free as possible. Every command that Cod gives is for our good. (Billy Graham)

2. What God commands in scripture is for our own good. He knows what will bring men the highest good. Unsaved men pervert the truth. For instance, fifty years ago it was chic to smoke cigarettes, and any Christians who didn’t smoke, because

their bodies were temples of God, were looked upon as squares. But after 50 years and much research, even the secular world in general knows smoking is not good for the human body.

3. Today the world thinks premarital and extramarital sex is the “in” thing, but venereal diseases and AIDS is causing many to rethink this whole issue.

IV. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT PREMARITAL SEX?

A. The Sex Act Before Marriage is Forbidden in the Old Testament.

1. According to Jewish law, a man did not have to marry a maiden if he found out before marriage she was not a virgin. This shows the importance the Bible places on purity before marriage. Adultery (extramarital sex) was punishable by death. *“If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death” (Lev. 20:10).*
2. However, premarital sexual relations were not punishable by death. *“If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins” (Exo. 22:16, 17).* But marriage was usually to follow if there had been premarital sexual relations.
3. This does not, however, necessarily mean that if a person today gets involved in premarital sex that he or she should get married to that person, although in some cases this would be the right course of action, providing they have repented of that sin and are ready for marriage.

B. The Sex Act Before Marriage is Forbidden in the New Testament

1. *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality” “Flee from sexual immorality” (Eph. 5:8; 1 Cor. 6:13).*
2. The Christian is to avoid all sexual immorality or “fornication” as the KJV translates it. The word fornication means any form of illicit sexual intercourse whether premarital or extramarital.
3. Originally “fornication” meant “to prostitute one’s body for hire.” Today it is not so much the idea of selling one’s body, but rather selling out for a momentary satisfaction of the sex drive.

The real thing is the fulfillment of sex in marriage. In marriage, sex is designed to be the beautiful physical expression of the commitment of love—the complete union of lives, not just bodies. Fornication is a prostitution of our manhood or womanhood, whether for money or fleeting moment of sexual gratification - (Bob Smith, Love Story . . . The Real Thing).

C. The Sex Act Before Marriage is Against the Moral Law of God.

1. *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified, that you should avoid sexual immorality: that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man, but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 4:3-7).*

2. It is God's revealed, moral, will that a Christian should avoid sexual immorality because it is God's will that the Christian should live a holy life.
- D. The Sex Act Before Marriage Makes One Joined in Body to Another.
1. *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you now know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh'" (1 Cor. 6:15-16).*
 2. To enter into premarital relations with another is to become one with that person. The context is about prostitutes, but it may refer to having a sexual affair with anyone.
 3. Sexual union may imply marriage in God's eyes, although commentators disagree over this point. The sex act is most certainly designed by God to consummate marriage. Becoming one flesh is certainly a psychological union as well as a physical union, showing the high premium God places on the sex act.
 4. The act of premarital sex involves a person so deeply with another person because there is a psychological as well as a physical union of two people. It is difficult to get uninvolved when two people are deeply involved sexually.
- E. The Sex Act Before Marriage Destroys a Person.
1. *"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).*
 2. Sexual immorality more than any other sin brings guilt and frustration, causing people to become hardened or break down mentally because of guilt or anger. Sexual sin is also the most difficult sin from which to break away. Sexual immorality destroys one's relationship to God and causes deep conflicts in the soul.
- F. The Sex Act Before Marriage is an Abuse of the Body.
1. *"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19,20).*
 2. God indwells true Christians for the purpose that their bodies might belong to Him. *"The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (1 Cor. 6:13).*
 3. Fornication is a violation of God's basic intent, in that the fornicator gives his body to the use and gratification of another, not to the Lord.
 4. The hedonistic philosophy which says, "We can do whatever we want with our body in sexual relations as long as we are not hurting anyone else," is not taught in the Bible.
- G. The Sex Act Before Marriage is Man's Greatest Temptation.
1. *"Flee from sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18). "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22).*
 2. Illicit sex can ensnare a person like no other sin and can lead to many other kinds of sins. We must flee sexual immorality!
 3. This does not say Christians will not have sex drives or that they will never lust, but they are to flee lusts when they do come.
- H. The Sex Act Before Marriage Cannot be Hidden from God.

1. *“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways . . . Where can I go from your Spirit. Where can I flee from your presence?” (Psa. 139: 1-4, 7).*
2. God knows all about us whether we are in church, in some compromising position with our boyfriend or home alone with our girlfriend. We cannot escape God!
3. The sooner we learn that premarital and extramarital sexual activity is sin before God, the better off we will be and our spiritual life will get a tremendous boost.

V. HOW WILL ONE WHO GETS INVOLVED IN PREMARITAL SEX END UP?

A. God Will Judge the Hard-core Sexually Impure.

1. *“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb. 13:4).*
2. All those who have an habitual life of sexual immorality and adultery will be judged and condemned if they don’t repent and receive God’s forgiveness.
3. Fornicators may be having fun in this world, but they will not have any fun in the next world!

B. God Will Judge the Mere Professing Christian Who is Repeatedly Involved in Sexual Immorality.

1. *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient” (Eph. 5:3-6).*
2. No matter what a person’s profession of faith may be, if he or she is continually and habitually involved in premarital and extramarital sex that person is not saved and will be excluded from heaven. Why? Because his life did not match his profession. Sexual immorality is so dangerous because those who habitually live in it put their souls in jeopardy.

I heard about a preacher who believes in and practices polygamy. He has a wife and two other women living with him in his home. He is sexually involved with all three women. He claims he is married in God’s sight to all three, but only one of the women in the sight of the State. This man claims to be a Christian and gives as his rationale the Old Testament teaching of many wives, ignoring Christ’s teachings of monogamy. This man is deceived. If he continues in the practice of polygamy, he has no reason to believe he has ever been saved by Christ.

C. God Will Forgive All Sexually Immoral People Who Truly Repent.

1. *“Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God: Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what*

some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

2. A person before conversion to Christ can and often is involved in all kinds of sexual immorality, but God forgives men on the basis of Christ’s death for sin. Those who are truly converted turn from their former slavery to sex.
 3. God has no place in His kingdom for habitual fornicators since their hearts are committed to the reign of lust. But God has plenty of room for those who receive Christ and make sexual immorality a thing of the past.
 4. God’s redeeming grace can always overcome the past grip of sin, and when we make Christ our Lord, sexual immorality will become incompatible with our new life in Christ.
- D. God Will Discipline True Christians Who Fall into Sexual Immorality.
1. *“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and He punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’” (Heb. 12:5-6).*
 2. It is possible for true Christians to get out of fellowship with their Lord and fall into the sin of premarital sex. A new Christian may fall back temporarily into old sexual patterns and/or older Christians may get a rebellious heart and go after strange flesh. If this is the case, a Christian must realize God will discipline him. There will be great conviction of sin and God will wield His rod, for He desires holiness from His children.
 3. A perfect example of this is King David who fell into adultery with Bathsheba. God forgave David, but he suffered from God’s discipline for the rest of his life.
 4. A great deterrent to premarital sexual activity, when the emotions rationalize that it is the perfectly natural thing to do, is the knowledge this sin will result in the disciplinary hand of God.

I knew a preacher who was physically attracted to another woman in his congregation. At first, it was a friendship, then lots of flirting. It evolved into touching, hugging and kissing, and he was involved in everything short of the act of intercourse. He rationalized that God said no sex, but allowed for heavy petting. He was a Christian man, involved with another woman and yet he thought God would approve as long as he did not commit the sex act. He was a deceived man. When all this came to light, he almost lost his wife, his ministry and his mind.

This story tells us that the best of men rationalize when it comes to this whole area of sex.