

Why Sex outside of Marriage is Condemned by God

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In 1998 I was getting a little bored with my middle-aged Ford Probe. Mercury had come out with a new Cougar that was very sporty, so I went over to the dealership to check it out. Of course, I wanted to see how it felt, so I asked for a test drive- after all, how would I know that this vehicle was right for me unless I took it for a spin first? The V-6 engine purred as I hit the pedal to the floor, shifting through the gears. Delighted, I ended up buying the car.

Many Americans have the same attitude about marriage that they have about cars: “Shouldn’t I take her/him for a test drive before tying the knot?” “How do we know that we’re sexually compatible?” In 1970 only about 500,000 opposite sex couples lived together whereas today nearly 5 million live together outside of marriage. More than 50 percent of couples who marry today in America have lived together beforehand.¹

I was surprised to pick up an article in Psychology Today that contradicted this worldly wisdom of co-habitation outside of marriage. The author (Nancy Wartik) is liberal in her morals regarding premarital sex. She wrote,

“I couldn’t imagine getting hitched to anyone I hadn’t taken on a test-spin as a roommate.” Her attitude about her own personal choice hasn’t changed, “In my and my husband’s case, the premarital experiment seems to have worked out well.”²

Yet in contradiction to this, she wrote,

“According to recent research, our year of shacking up could have doomed our relationship. Couples who move in together before marriage have up to two times the odds of divorce, as compared with couples who marry before living together. Moreover, married couples who have lived together *before exchanging vows* tend to have poorer-quality marriages than couples who moved in after the wedding. Those who cohabited first report less satisfaction, more arguing, poorer communication and lower levels of *commitment*. Many researchers now argue that our penchant for combining households before taking *vows* is undermining our ability to *commit*. Meaning, the precautions we take to ensure marriage is right for us may wind up working against us.”

(*Emphasis mine*) Notice the key phrases in this quote: commitments and vows.

One woman she interviewed who had two unsuccessful co-habitation arrangements wrote,

¹ Psychology Today, “The Perils of Playing House”, July/August 2005, p. 44

² *ibid*

“you have this faith that you’re moving in with someone in order to *deepen the commitment*, and it doesn’t necessarily happen at all. Those two things are not correlated... Living together is a waste of time and energy... My living-together experience was a catalog of lost and broken things, never mind my heart.”

She later realized commitment was the key to a happy marriage,

“There was no take it or leave it...the *commitment was the foundation of the marriage*. Alas, my only experience of living with someone is that when you leave the door open for *quasi-commitment*, *quasi-commitment* is what you get.”

“In 2000, sociologists Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher surprised the marriage-defying liberal community with their book *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially*. Waite and Gallagher argue from a pile of studies and statistics that married people experience far greater emotional, physical, economic, and sexual benefits than those who are single, cohabiting or divorced.”³

Marriage and sex at its core is all about commitment- it’s a life-long covenant.

Sex and Covenants

Sex without commitment is a minefield, leading to devastating results. University of Texas professor J. Budziszewski explains more pointedly what happens when people focus on sex for pleasure instead of covenanting with each other first in marriage:

“Sexuality is like duct tape. The first time you use it, it sticks you to whomever it touches. But just like that duct tape, if you rip it off and then touch it to someone else, it isn’t as sticky as it was before. So what happens when you pull it loose from one partner after another? You just don’t stick anymore, your sexual partners seem like strangers, and you stop feeling anything.”⁴

Our God is a covenant keeping God, and He has created us in His image- we know that we ought to be covenant-keeping people. We know that it is a grave sin to make a vow to love till death do us part and then not keep the vow, but do we truly realize the cost of sexual relationships prior to marriage absent of a life-long covenant?

Physical Consequences of Sex without Covenants

We just reviewed the effects of fornication and co-habitation on the depth of our relationships. What about the effects on our bodies?

Consider a few statistics concerning sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)⁵:

65 million Americans are infected with an incurable STD.

³ As quoted by Chuck Missler in K-house eNews, August 24th, 2004 Commentary

⁴ *Ask Me Anything: Provocative Answers for College Students*, University of Texas professor J. Budziszewski, as quoted in Chuck Colson’s, Breakpoint Commentary, August 8th, 2005.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.niaid.nih.gov/dmid/stds/condomreport.pdf

15 million people become newly infected with STDs yearly and 2/3 of STDs occur in people under 25 years of age.

80% of people infected with STDs are unaware that they are infected and STDs are contagious even though no symptoms exist. Condoms do not provide adequate protection from any STD or pregnancy.

Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop wrote, “When you have sex with someone, you are having sex with everyone they have had sex with for the last 10 years, and everyone they and their partners have had sex with for the last 10 years.”⁶

There is only one sure way to have safe sex: practice abstinence until marriage, select a partner that isn't infected and remain sexually faithful during marriage. God wants what is best for us, thus He warns us, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness ...therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie...God gave them up to vile passions... *receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due*...God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting: being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness [and] covetousness.”⁷ Sexual sin has dire consequences.

Molech the Hungry Fire God

The ultimate sacrifice for a worshipper of Molech the Canaanite fire god was the sacrifice of one's firstborn child alive. The child was placed alive in the blazing hot bronze arms of Molech and offered as a living sacrifice as the flesh sizzled from the heat. This was done in times of extreme hardship and not necessarily willingly to appease the hungry fire god. “The sacred precinct of Molech is called the *topheth* in the Bible. The area is a graveyard of sorts, where the ashes of victims are placed in an urn... Some of these graveyards run into the thousands of victims... The most famous [of these graveyards] would be that mentioned in the Bible, said to be in the valley of Hinnom, just outside of Jerusalem. The valley of Hinnom runs out into the Kidron valley in the south of Jerusalem. Hinnom became Gehenna to the Greeks, which is the Greek word for Hell.”⁸ The Bible warned the Israelites about offering sacrifices to Molech in-between two passages on adultery and homosexuality: “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.”⁹ The people were warned not to “*prostitute* themselves to Molech.”¹⁰ Amazingly, the Israelites of the Old Testament frequently disobeyed the Lord and set-up places to worship Molech and other gods.

⁶ Pamphlet entitled, “How at Risk are You?” www.lifecyclebooks.com

⁷ Romans 1:18-32

⁸ 2002, Rodney R. Baird, www.ancientroute.com/religion/Godsname/molech.htm

⁹ Lev 18:21-24

¹⁰ Lev 20:5

Modern Day Molech?

What would happen today if we found out that a country or religious group or culture was practicing child sacrifices? Would we press our government to issue economic sanctions? Could such evil actually exist today? Recent headlines read, “*Mother Hires Killer to Hack Child to Pieces!*” “Recently a mother paid a man to kill her young boy who was hacked to death with a sharp instrument, cutting off his right arm and severing his head. The woman, who was unrepentant, said it was her “right” to do so because the child was interfering with the quality of her lifestyle.”¹¹ Was this some kind of satanic cult? No- the woman had a partial birth abortion. Over 30 million babies have been murdered by abortion in the U.S. since Roe vs. Wade in 1973. When we offer our bodies to sexual immorality, are we not, albeit unwillingly and under hardship, offering ourselves to an idol? Are we even willing to murder our unborn to this idol? Fifty years of studies have firmly established that breast cancer is 3 times as likely to develop in women who have had an abortion.¹² God’s wrath abides on the unrepentant murderer and all accomplices to that murder.

Spiritual Consequences of Sex without the Marriage Covenant

The Bible warns,

“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body...flee sexual immorality.”¹³

Our God is a covenant keeping God. He created us in His image to have fellowship with Him. Does it strike you as strange that in the Ten Commandments and throughout scripture that God is called a “jealous God”?¹⁴ He created us to enter into a relationship with Himself, yet like the Israelites, we have prostituted ourselves spiritually to other idols- our lives of sin demonstrate our going after other lovers. Marriage is a covenant that is a shadow of an eternal covenant. As men and women created in the image of God, He calls us to be covenant people. Jesus challenged us to complete integrity regarding our vows and promises: “Let your ‘yes’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no’”¹⁵ Preceding this verse is discussion of how lust is adultery of the heart and how divorce causes our spouse to commit adultery. God is serious about covenants and wants us likewise to be covenant keeping people- both our thoughts and our actions before and after we get married.

Who can say that he/she has always had a pure heart? Sexual immorality has devastating spiritual consequences, because God says it is a form of idolatry- while we’re focused on meeting our own lustful desires, we are serving another god instead of the Lord.

¹¹ Taken from Living Waters Publications, P.O. Box 1172, Bellflower, CA 90706

¹² Worldnetdaily.com, “MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH Abortion-breast cancer link covered up by scientists? Researcher says 'pro-choice' bias has hidden deadly risks to women”, May 16th, 2005.
www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=44282

¹³ 1 Corinthians 6:13,18

¹⁴ Exodus 20:5, 2 Cor 11:1

¹⁵ Matthew 5:37

“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”¹⁶

The only bed that is a pure bed is the marriage bed- all sex outside of marriage in thought or deed is a form of idolatry, for it is entered outside of a covenant relationship. God knows the strong pull that sexual pleasures have- how quickly we can put them above obedience to God,

“See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights.”¹⁷

Esau was a man who in a time of intense appetite compromised himself for a bowl of stew. In our intense sexual appetites, will we throw away our intimacy with God and sexual purity in exchange for an idolatrous, false intimacy- a moment of ecstasy? God calls all lust and sexual immorality a form of idolatry,¹⁸ and warns,

“Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers...will inherit the kingdom of God.”¹⁹ “...Their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur.”²⁰

The Lord of Covenants

God brought mankind into the world with a free will to choose to love Him and obey Him or to reject Him. Mankind rejected Him and violated all His covenants. Ever since the first rebellion of man, God has been unveiling a plan to bring man back into a covenant relationship with Himself. God revealed His standard of perfection when He gave the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai, which included the Ten Commandments. Man miserably failed to keep the Commandments that served as a reminder to man of his desperate need of a new covenant with God. The Lord prophesied through the Prophet Jeremiah,

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel...not according to the *covenant* that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My *covenant* which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the *covenant* that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor...saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they

¹⁶ Hebrews 13:4

¹⁷ Hebrews 12:16

¹⁸ Col 3:5

¹⁹ 1 Cor 6:9-10

²⁰ Revelation 21:8, cf. Gal 5:19-21

all shall *know* Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will *forgive* their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”²¹

This new covenant came to provide forgiveness of sins and an intimate relationship, something that the old covenant- the Law of Moses, couldn't possibly do. Isaiah prophesies how the Lord would bring the new covenant about: through the Servant who is the Messiah, God become man:

“I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and *give You as a covenant to the people*, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in the darkness from the prison house.”²²

How would the Servant become a covenant for us and deliver us from the prison house of our sins and the blindness of idolatry? Isaiah prophesied,

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all...He was led as a lamb to the slaughter... You make His soul an offering for sin...By His knowledge My righteous servant shall *justify* many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”²³

Our greatest need before a holy God is to be justified, to be declared “not guilty”, to be acquitted. Jesus Christ paid the price on our behalf- He bore all of our sin on the cross, that we could once again enter into an eternal covenant with God and be adopted into His family through faith.

An Ancient Love Story

I want to transport us back to the 10th century B.C. in Israel. Imagine yourself in this story as the virgin bride or groom to be who has never seen a person of the opposite sex either naked or partially naked- not physically or in magazines, billboards, T.V., the movies or the Internet. You grew up in a family that prized sexual purity and modesty. You meet a person of the opposite sex whom you are attracted to inside and out, and in due time the two of you decide, along with your families, that you would make a good match for marriage. Every time you see each other in public, the bride to be is modestly dressed, and you don't even meet in private. Indeed, in that culture a woman's modesty and virginity was highly prized and protected by the older brothers, the father and mother and even other relatives and neighbors. The groom to be was respectful of her, not seeking to touch her inappropriately and never meeting with her privately- to protect her reputation as a woman of purity. Passion is building in the hearts of both of them before marriage- but it is a passion with restraint. The bride to be reminds herself before her

²¹ Jeremiah 31:31-34

²² Isaiah 42:7, 49:8

²³ Isaiah 53:4-11

friends not to “arouse or awaken love until it so desires.”²⁴

Finally, the wedding comes. Love has been building in their hearts as they realize that they are entering a permanent, safe and secure loving covenant before God, family and the people of the community- all are vowing in that ceremony to support them in their life-long covenant with each other. Wedding night arrives. She’s in the bathroom getting ready to present herself to her newly married husband for the first time. The room is charged with electricity. All thoughts are towards each other. Neither have memories of another sexual encounter. There is no one to compare against, no performance bar to meet. Both are fumbling around drunk on love as they learn a new art together. They have managed self-control with each other through months of powerful passions leading up to marriage. Now that they are coming together physically, their confidence in each other is superb. They have seen the restraint in each other before marriage and trust each other to exhibit that same restraint to protect against flirtation and adultery with others. These thoughts don’t even touch their minds since they are so secure in their relationship.

Imagine what it must have been like for the groom to undress her the first time. The Bible tells us what it was like. He started his gaze at the top of her head and moved downward from there, describing her features in a sensitive way. He took off her veil, “How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful!”²⁵ There is no comparison going on in his mind of previous sexual encounters or playmate centerfolds or seductive women in bikinis on T.V.- all of his attention, affection, emotions and fantasies are focused on her. “Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead... Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely... your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance.”²⁶

The emotion and arousal keeps building- they can practically hear the thunder of each other’s hearts.

“Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountains of myrrh and to the hill of incense.”

²⁷This was the first time he’d seen a woman’s breasts since his mother nursed him. His bride to be had no push-up bra. There was no dulling of the excitement of that wedding night through previous knowledge- her body was a mystery unveiled in the proper time- at the time of life-long covenant.

We see he is completely entranced and delighted by her untarnished beauty,

²⁴ Song of Solomon 3:5

²⁵ Song of Solomon 4:1

²⁶ SS 4:2-4

²⁷ SS 4:5-6

“All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you... you have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride... how delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! ...Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue.”²⁸

Focus returns from her breasts to her eyes. Indeed, through the eyes we get the best glimpse into a person’s soul. Notice the “French kissing” going on here- maybe it should be called “Hebrew kissing” instead! Notice that in gazing into her heart with all the physical arousal that is going on, that his greatest arousal is his love for her- that is the prize that will mature even as her physical body slowly fades in glory over the coming decades. He then rejoices in her purity,

“You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.”

Single ladies- don’t rob your future husband of this praise and gift! Single men- give your future wives the purity and passion that they deserve as your first sexual encounter. If it’s too late for that, repent and ask God to do the healing work in your heart and mind, to erase as much as possible the sexual memories, and to renew a vow to purity. The bride then gives the invitation to her groom to come in:

“Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.”²⁹

His response after having drunk deep in love?

“I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk.”³⁰

Complete satisfaction is compared to a multi-course banquet. There is no lack- he is completely fulfilled and spent. My friend, when two lovers enter into the holy marriage bed with self-control and purity beforehand in love, and the marriage is a place of refuge, security and strong covenant, then the physical will follow. No test drive is needed. God has made it work that way.

The bride summarized her love and commitment toward the end of the book, later in their marriage,

“Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like a blazing fire, like a mighty

²⁸ SS 4:7-11

²⁹ SS 4:16

³⁰ SS 5:1

flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned.”³¹

My single friend: let your love stick. Don't give it away outside of the marriage covenant. Take the bride's advice: don't sell out for love in any way through illicit sex. God has a plan for your love life. Stick to His plan and be blessed. Live a life of self-control and purity that you may attain to a love as strong as death, a love that sticks and sticks for good.

Marital love is the strongest and most invincible force in the human experience. It is a shadow to the world of an even greater love- the love of God for those He purchased with the ultimate sacrifice of love- the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. “God demonstrates His love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”³² His love sticks for eternity- it is a covenant that goes beyond, “till death do us part.”

Personal Thoughts

I can't write about sexual immorality without looking into my own heart- a heart that has chased other idols. At times my passions, instead of being directed toward God, were enslaved in the idolatry of lust. I cried out as the Apostle Paul cried out in realization of his utter sinfulness “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?”³³ The deliverer is Jesus Christ our Lord!

Jesus rescued me from all my sinful idolatries, and each day is a new day of grace to depend on Him to rescue me from the idols this world offers and draw me closer to Himself, the One true God. Writing about sex before marriage is a healing balm to me- I long for others to learn from my sins. Sexual sin before marriage has consequences- before, during and after wedding night. I write this having recently celebrated a 19th wedding anniversary- our marriage has been through much trouble, but God's grace has abounded, and I can truthfully say that these last 6 months have been the best 6 months of our marriage as we both have grown in our love for each other. Indeed, we are growing in our learning of what it means to be in a covenant relationship and Jesus Christ's faithfulness to us has been a beacon of light in the midst of dark times.

An Eternal Covenant With God

Have you come to a place of realization of your utter sinfulness before a holy God? He knows your every thought, every motive, every word and every deed and will judge them on Judgment Day. Will you be innocent on that day? If you haven't already, come to terms with your Creator. Repent of all your idols of sexual immorality- either physically, or in your heart as lust or covetousness. Search your heart for all sin and repent of it: make a choice to turn from it- if you make the choice in brokenness and reliance on God, He will give you the power to overcome temptation. Jesus Christ died on the cross for all your sin. There is no sin that He cannot forgive.

³¹ 8:5-7

³² Rom 5:8

³³ Romans 7:24

A woman was caught in the act of adultery and presented to Jesus by religious leaders who wanted to test His compassion, thinking that His compassion would be His downfall. They reminded Jesus that according to the Law of Moses, this woman should be stoned. (Indeed, God's law reveals all of our utter sinfulness and the condemnation to come. Who can stand before God's law and declare himself/herself innocent?) Jesus turned the tables on them and said, "If anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."³⁴ One by one God began to convict their own hearts of sin and they departed. Jesus then said to her, "Go now and leave your life of sin."

In another instance Jesus was eating at the house of a religious leader who thought he was a good person in God's eyes because of his good works and absence of gross sins. A desperate prostitute recognized Jesus as the Savior. She ran with a jar of expensive perfume into the house of the religious leader and stood behind Jesus at His feet weeping, wetting His feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair, kissing them and pouring perfume on them. She had recognized the complete sinfulness of her life and her need for forgiveness. Jesus proclaimed to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven...your faith has saved you; go in peace." The woman was forgiven and given a brand new start. The religious owner of the house was disgusted with Jesus. He remained in his unforgiven, self-righteous and condemned state. Jesus later told a story comparing repentant sinners who came to grips with their sinfulness with religious leaders who thought they were good in God's eyes because of their righteous deeds. He told the religious leaders in conclusion,

"I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him."³⁵

John the Baptist preached to all the need for repentance, yet the religious leaders saw no need in their lives.

My friend, which person do you identify yourself with- the forgiven prostitute, or the religious leaders who thought they had no need of repentance and forgiveness? Will you continue to justify your sin before a holy God, or in brokenness will agree with God about your utter sinfulness, repent and cry out for deliverance? Will you hunger and thirst after righteousness and rely completely on the blood of Jesus Christ to forgive you of all sin? He paid the price for your sin on the cross- His blood was shed in your place. The Bible says "He who knew no sin became sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."³⁶ It's your choice. Today is the day to enter into an eternal covenant with the One true God and forsake all other idols. He will never fail you. He is holding out His eternal wedding ring to you to bring you into an eternal covenant. Will you receive it by faith? Will you continue in Him and forsake all other loves?

³⁴ John 8:7

³⁵ Matthew 21:28-32

³⁶ 2 Cor 5:21

In Christ's Love,

Mike Porter