

Magazine

Let's Talk Frankly about Dating

John A. Smith

Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things (Ecl. 11:9).

Dating can be an exciting and emotionally rewarding experience. It can provide you with an opportunity to find out what makes the other person tick. It can allow a friendship to develop and mature. You can find someone whom you can care about and who will care about you. Spending time with the right person for the right reason can be a wonderful and satisfying blessing. Your world can come alive with new meaning when you share it with someone who respects you and God's morals.

As with any activity in life, your most important goal in dating should be to please and honor God. "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Col. 3:17). Your personal pleasure and amusement should be secondary to honoring and pleasing God. The person who is able to approach dating from this perspective will set appropriate dating standards, communicate them clearly to prospective dates, and conduct oneself in accordance with those standards.

When Should You Start Dating?

What is a reasonable age at which to start dating? I'm not talking about meeting a bunch of friends at a ball game and sitting dreamily with that cute guy or girl from your

fourth period history class. I'm talking about serious dating when you are paired off with one other person with the intention of spending a good bit of time with him/her.

There is no right age for everyone. Some people mature more rapidly than others and not everyone is as responsible as others their age. It has been suggested that a person is mature and responsible enough to begin dating when he is ready to make responsible, godly dating rules and have the resolve to stick to them.

Special Issue — Because We Love You . . .

As a word of caution, there are a number of studies that indicate that the earlier a girl* begins serious dating the greater the likelihood that she will

become sexually involved before marriage. In *Sex Respect*, Colleen Kelly Mast shared a study that found the following:

- 91% of the girls who began dating at or before 12 had sex before they graduated from high school.
- 56% of those who began dating at 14 had sex before they graduated from high school.
- 20% of those who began dating at 16 had sex before they graduated from high school.

* All the studies I found focused on girls. I have not found any statistics regarding boys.

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Let's Talk About the Music You Like

Sid Latham

Most of you do not know me and that presents a difficulty when discussing a potentially sensitive subject. Because of this I would like to provide you with a little background. I was converted in the fall of 1990. When I was converted, I was a huge fan of rock-n-roll. I had gone to sleep listening to music for as long as I could remember. One of my closest friends had every album Led Zeppelin had ever done and I knew the words to almost all of

their songs. It soon became apparent to me that my love of music and my love for the Lord were in conflict. I had to make a choice. I took a cue from the Ephesian brethren in Acts 19 and destroyed the majority of my tapes. (I did not destroy enough of them, but it was a beginning.) I am telling you this because I want you to understand that I have wrestled with these issues myself.



The other side of this coin is that I don't know you either. I don't know how old you are. I don't know what kind of music you like, but this is not about taste or age. It is about being pure and undefiled in the presence of God. I will make a couple of assumptions. I am assuming that since you are reading this article you are concerned about what you listen to. I am also assuming that since you picked up this magazine you have an interest in spiritual matters. This will be a spiritual appeal. It will be an appeal for uncompromising purity in an area where there is very little purity to be found.

Does the Music I Listen to Really Matter That Much?

The short answer is an emphatic yes! Music has always been profoundly influential. Perhaps the best way to establish the importance of music is to examine its role in the New Testament. In Colossians 3:10ff Paul writes about the renewal that the Christian is to undergo. This renewal is in conformity with the image of Christ. It is the most radical transformation imaginable. In keeping with this goal Paul goes on to write that Christians should "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16, NASU).

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Let's Talk About the Movies You Watch

Matthew Allen

From 1979 to 1985, the *Dukes of Hazzard* reigned as one of the most popular television shows. I remember my family gathering around the television each Friday night to watch a new episode. I can remember playing with a toy car that I envisioned as the "General Lee" (Bo & Luke Duke's famous souped-up Dodge Charger). I could even do a pretty good imitation of Sheriff Roscoe P. Coltrane's laugh. A few years ago a cable network aired reruns of that series and I watched a few episodes. When I watched, I thought, "How could I have ever watched this? It's so lame." Lame to what? The shows and movies of today? Think about it. Today's entertainment is filled with graphic and vulgar language, explicit sex, and extreme violence. The more "edgier" a movie is the better. You see, even in my short lifetime, standards have been lowered and we've all become desensitized to what Hollywood considers *normal* and *acceptable* behavior. We look at television shows and movies of the past and forget that they pushed the limits of moral standards of the time. It is scary to imagine what the future holds as producers continue to cross the line of decency and morality.



We must constantly remind ourselves of the need to use good judgment and discretion with what we watch. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2, NASU). Christians have been called to live godly lives, and we must be true to this calling, no matter the cost. The key to the renewal process is filling our mind with that which is uplifting morally and spiritually. Using good judgment with the movies and television shows we view will require some difficult decisions. While these may seem of little significance in the short term, we must keep God's will at the forefront of our lives. Who isn't familiar with these rationalizations? *Will this really compromise my Christianity? I can do it just a few times and I won't be hurt spiritually. It's not a big deal, besides all my friends want to see it.* And then the compromise is made, the questionable movie is watched, and we leave the theater filled with regret.

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(This series will be concluded in the next issue of *Truth Magazine*.)

Is this really that important? Solomon said, “For as he thinks within himself, so he is” (Prov. 23:7, NASU). What we put into our minds makes us who we are. In the New Testament, Paul wrote, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Phil. 4:8, NASU). Let’s face it. There are just some movies out there that will do nothing good for one’s soul. The characters in the new movie *Assault on Precinct 13* use language that takes God’s name in vain forty-two times, use the F-word one hundred twenty-five times and the S-word seventy-five times. What spiritual benefit can be found in listening to someone repeatedly take God’s name in vain? What spiritual benefit can be found in someone glorifying fornication? How can one grow spiritually while being exposed to the acceptance of immorality? What spiritual good can come from watching a movie where what is not normal is portrayed as normal? It is one thing to be accidentally exposed to inappropriate things, but to willingly involve oneself in the digestion of ungodly behavior is another thing. Paul wrote of the need to take “every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5, NASU). We, like David, must make a commitment to *set no worthless thing before (our) eyes* (Ps. 101:3, NASU).

But what about the ratings system? *I know I shouldn’t see an “R” rated movie, but “PG” or “PG-13” is OK, isn’t it?* Not necessarily. Traditional wisdom says that movies with the “PG” and “PG-13” ratings are not as vile and vulgar as movies with the “R” or “NC-17” rating. “Movies that ought to be “R” are squeezed down into “PG-13” in a cynical attempt to increase the potential audience,” says Roger Ebert of *Ebert and Roper at the Movies*. In “PG-13 is the Secret to Movie Success,” an article in *USA Today* (07/02/03), Andy Seiler wrote “In *Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle*, Demi Moore lasciviously licks Cameron Diaz’s face, the Angels bump and grind in a production number, and numerous double-entendres refer to group sex and hookers. That’s not to mention a brutal attack by a former boyfriend on Drew Barrymore’s character that was trimmed, according to Barrymore, to avoid an R rating.” One person in this article was quoted, “The amount of violence and language you can get away with in a ‘PG-13’ file is amazing.” Remember these statements were made from those within the movie industry. If those of the world can easily identify inappropriate behavior and content that crosses the line, why should the New Testament Christian willingly subject himself to such? This is not to say that all “PG” or “PG-13” movies are inappropriate. Discretion needs to be exercised. Use the internet to look at movie reviews. Two good sources are Plugged IN at www.pluggedinonline.com and Preview Online at www.gospelcom.net/preview/. Also, use common sense. Usually, one can get a good idea of a questionable movie from the title and the way the movie is

promoted. Guard your heart! Solomon said, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (Prov. 4:23, NASU).

Consider your influence. How can you have an example that glorifies Christ when tagging along with or inviting friends over to watch a movie filled with ungodliness? From reading the Scriptures, it is clear that New Testament Christians took a clear stand to not compromise their influence. They were even derided for it. “In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead” (1 Pet. 4:4-5, NASU). Your reputation is important! The Scriptures teach that your influence is of more value than a precious ointment or great wealth. Solomon said, “A good name is better than a good ointment” (Eccl. 7:1, NASU). In Proverbs he wrote, “A good name is to be more desired than great wealth, Favor is better than silver and gold” (Prov. 22:1, NASU). Just a few seconds of thoughtlessness can permanently damage our influence with someone outside of Christ.

If we are not careful, hypocrisy can set in. When we become a Christian, through our confession, we proclaim to the world that we are of Christ — loyal to him and his ways. We proclaim we have a new Master, being set free from the shackles of sin. It is hypocritical to confess one thing and do another. Our hypocrisy can lead someone else to sin. Others are watching your example and actions. We either lead people toward Jesus or turn them away.

Consider how you use your time. Entire blocks of time during the week can be chewed up by watching television, going to movies, and playing video games. The Alan Guttmacher Institute, a non-profit research organization, found that by the time they graduate from high school, American teenagers will have spent 15,000 hours in front of the TV and only 11,000 hours in formal classroom instruction. College students were reported to watch an average of 5.5 to eight hours of TV every weekday (http://badgerherald.com/news/2003/11/05/tv_watching_linked_t.php). Could your time be better spent? Are there priorities being neglected? Things being put off? Life is brief. While recreational pursuits are not sinful in and of themselves, too much of a good thing can be bad. We have a responsibility to make good use of our time. The Psalmist said, “Remember what my span of life is; for what vanity You have created all the sons of men!” (Ps. 89:47, NASU). In the New Testament, Paul reminded us to “make the most of your time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:16, NASU).

Remember you made a commitment to live a godly life. “The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked” (1 John 2:6,

Let's Talk About How You Dress

Jason McCort

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” Those are the words of Paul as taken from Romans 12:1-2. That is a challenge that must be taken seriously when you consider that God is the only standard of holiness.

Young people, no matter what you may face in the next few years, you will not face a greater challenge than that of maintaining your purity with the temptations that you face daily. One of the greatest threats to the moral purity of today's young people is immodest dress. It is directly linked to sins such as pornography, prostitution, rape, covetousness and gambling.

God has made himself very clear concerning how he expects his children to dress. Let us examine what the Bible says concerning this subject and then consider what practical applications can be made so Christ can be seen living in us (Gal. 2:20).

NASU). We are imitators of Jesus, “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1, NASU). We must never do anything that would compromise our stance with Jesus Christ. There are examples throughout both Old and New Testaments where godly men and women refused to compromise to the demands of ungodliness: Joseph (Gen. 39), Rahab (Josh. 2, 6), Daniel (Dan. 1), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3), and Stephen (Acts 6-7).

Follow in the example of Jesus! Peter wrote: “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21, NASU).

Let's Talk About the Shame of Nakedness.

The Bible is quite clear concerning the sin of nakedness. Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned against God by eating the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the inspired writer says concerning them: “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 loin coverings” (Gen. 3:7). They were ashamed of their nakedness. Ham, one of Noah's sons, was cursed for looking upon the nakedness of Noah (Gen. 9:20-25). Priests were not permitted to go up the steps to God's altar because of the risk of exposing their nakedness to others (Exod. 20:26). Nakedness, in general, is spoken of in the Bible as something of which one ought to be ashamed. Are you embarrassed to be seen in public with little clothing on or do you relish the attention that you receive when scantily clad?

It is important that we settle on a definition of “nakedness.” Most people, when they hear or read this word, think being naked is only when one is completely and totally without clothing. Such a narrow understanding of this word is not correct. Nakedness, as used in the Bible, does not necessarily mean that one is completely without clothing.

Tough decisions will present themselves to us throughout our lives. How we respond to them early in life lays a foundation for the remainder of life. I continue to be impressed with our young people today who make courageous decisions — demonstrating their loyalty and love for Christ. You can be and are an inspiration to those around you when you put your faith first. Make a commitment today to be strong for the Lord and withstand the pressure of filling your mind with ungodliness.

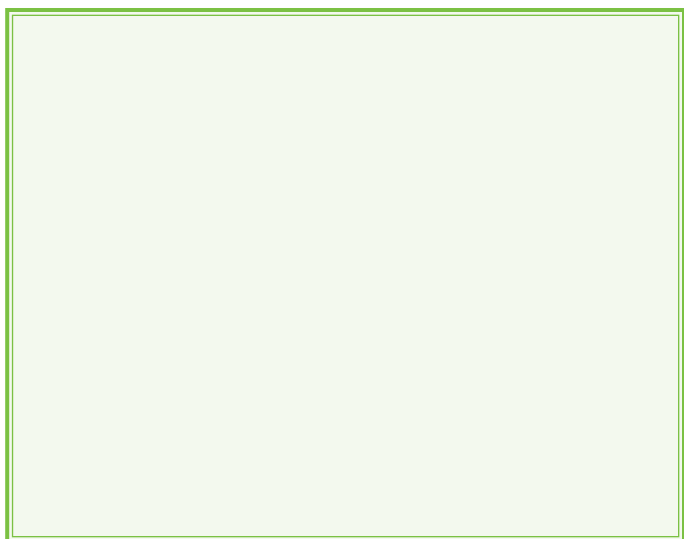
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Again, consider the example of Adam and Eve who made efforts to clothe themselves with fig leaves after realizing their nakedness. God still considered them to be naked after they attempted to clothe themselves or else he would not have provided them with additional clothing to better cover themselves (Gen. 3:21). Even my five-year-old son who sees somebody with little clothing on knows that person is naked. A person can show his or her nakedness even while wearing some clothing, such as a cheerleading outfit or a swimsuit. Nakedness of all forms is shameful, and young Christian men and women need to avoid it at all costs.

Let's Talk About How You Can Wear Too Much

Your whole body may be clothed yet you can still be dressed immodestly. The women of Judah were a prime example of such dress. They walked with “heads held high and seductive eyes, and go along with mincing steps and tinkle the bangles on their feet” (Isa. 3:16). As punishment, Isaiah wrote that the Lord would “take away the beauty of their anklets, headbands, crescent ornaments, dangling earrings, bracelets, veils, headdresses, ankle chains, sashes, perfume boxes, amulets, finger rings, nose rings, festal robes, outer tunics, cloaks, money purses, hand mirrors, undergarments, turbans and veils” (3:18-23). It is no coincidence that these proud women with seductive eyes were dressed in such a manner. They adorned themselves excessively in order to grab the attention of others. This type of attitude and dress resulted in severe punishment for these women.

Paul gives Timothy instructions concerning the dress of women in 1 Timothy 2:9-15. Paul instructs women to “adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly” (2:9). The word “proper,” as used in this verse, means orderly, well arranged, decent, modest (Vine’s). Young ladies, when contemplating what you will wear to the worship services, make sure your clothing is respectful and neat in appearance, not disheveled. Dressing modestly



means dressing with a sense of shame. It means dressing in such a way as not to attract the undue attention of others to your clothing, jewelry, or body. Your dress should reflect a total self-control that pervades everything that you do and say. Paul goes on to say that a woman’s dress should not consist of “braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments” (2:9). Paul is not saying a woman can never wear earrings or nice dresses, nor is he saying that a woman can never fix up her hair in a nice way when preparing to worship with the saints. What Paul is addressing is excess in clothing and other forms of adornment. Young ladies, you can cover every square inch of your body and still be dressed immodestly simply by wearing too much make-up or jewelry. You can dress immodestly by wearing wild and flashy clothing that brings too much attention to yourself.

Let's Talk About What You Should Wear

Ladies, not only are you told how not to dress but how you should dress. You need to dress in such a way that “is proper for women making a claim to godliness” (1 Tim. 2:10). I am well aware of how conscious you are about making sure your clothes match. You spend a lot of time making sure your clothes coordinate. I am certainly not condemning that attitude because I believe that falls under adorning oneself with “proper” clothing. However, we all need to be more concerned that our clothing matches our hearts than matching other articles of clothing we may be wearing. What you wear is a reflection of who you are. God desires women to be of pure character (Tit. 2:5). Your dress needs to reflect your purity. In no way does wearing short skirts, skirts with long slits that draw attention to your legs, low-cut or tight shirts, or shirts that show your mid-section (front or back) reveal anything godly about your character. If you claim to be a godly woman, you will earnestly seek out clothing that matches your godly character. Peter warns women not to give too much attention to their outward clothing but, instead, to give heed to those hidden qualities of the heart, those qualities which are “precious in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:3-4). God tells women he wants their energies and desires to be focused on maintaining a “gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Pet. 3:4). If your attire is outlandish or revealing, that clothing tells everybody that you come in contact with that you are not the kind of person that God expects you to be. In many respects, you are what you wear!

Let's Talk About What Is Really Important

There is something to be said for the nature of our outward adornment versus the nature of the godly qualities our Father wants in each of us. Peter writes that women should desire the “*imperishable* quality of a gentle and quiet spirit” (1 Pet. 3:4). Ultimately, our physical beauty is of no concern to God. He only cares about our character and how it is manifested in our actions and speech. No matter how old we get, no matter how wrinkled our skin may become, no

matter how much our bodies begin to deteriorate due to the advancement of age or disease, our Christ-like character, which is “precious in the sight of God,” if properly nurtured, will never fade away. Contrast that with the perishable nature of physical beauty and clothing. No matter how much you take care of your body, if you live long enough, your body will begin to fail. Your hair will turn gray or fall out. Your skin will wrinkle. Disease and age may rob you of your youthful attractiveness. Jewelry loses its luster. Your clothes will wear out and fade. What is in style today will be out of style in a few months. Look to the example of the godly women in the Bible. Peter writes that the women of old, such as Sarah, who placed their hope in God, dressed modestly (1 Pet. 3:5-6). These women wanted to follow God so much that they dressed themselves in such a manner that befitted a godly woman. They were not interested in pushing the envelope by seeing how little they could get away with wearing without sinning. They were only interested in looking as much like a follower of God as possible. Paul instructs us to flee from immorality (1 Cor. 6:18), not to toy with it. Young ladies, you would do well to become a child of Sarah (1 Pet. 3:6) by determining to invest less of your time and money into your outward appearance and more into growing into the holy women that God desires of you.

**If you claim to be a godly woman,
you will earnestly seek out clothing
that matches your godly character.**

Let’s Talk About How Your Dress Affects Others

Your dress not only affects yourself but affects others as well. Have you ever taken the time to contemplate what effect your clothing, or the lack thereof, would have on the mind and actions of others? It has the possibility of having a very negative impact on others. Consider the example of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1-4). While it is not clear whether or not Bathsheba knew that it was possible for others to see her bathing, it is abundantly clear that Bathsheba’s nakedness had a profound impact on the mind and actions of David, regardless of her intentions. The unfortunate snowball of sin that followed may have been avoided if David had never seen Bathsheba bathing. Ladies, when you wear short skirts, tight shirts and pants, and blouses that are so low or loose that one cannot but help but to see your cleavage, it affects the minds of young *and* older men alike. Jesus says that “everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28). It is extremely hard for men to control what they think when in the presence of women who refuse to dress with a sense of shamefacedness. Young men, by no means are you off the hook in regards to how your dress affects others. Paul and Peter’s instructions may have been directed towards a female audience but the principles expounded in both passages can be applied to males as well. We all need to “love your neighbor

as yourself” (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19) by thinking on how our dress affects others.

Let’s Talk About How You Dress at the Worship Services

Scripture that is not consistently applied to our lives is useless (John 14:15). Therefore, let us consider some practical applications of scriptural principles on how we dress.

Teenagers, you need to think carefully about how you dress when attending worship services. Let me preface what follows by stating that I am well aware that an individual’s economic situation or other reasons may preclude somebody from dressing nicely for worship services. If that is your situation, I am not talking to you. That being said, it has been my observation, both of young and old alike, that people have become very casual with how they dress for worship services. Of all places that we attend, I would submit that our dress while attending worship services needs to be given more consideration than any other place we may attend simply because of what we do while at the worship assembly. It is at these assemblies that we worship our Father and the God of this universe. The very character and nature of the One whom we are worshipping demands that we regard such occasions of worship with the highest honor and reverence we can muster. Our dress at the congregational assemblies reflects our attitude concerning how we view periods of worship. Consider the example of Joseph. Before coming into the presence of Pharaoh, Joseph shaved himself and changed his clothes (Gen. 41:14). Joseph had respect for Pharaoh’s position. If Joseph considered it appropriate to look nice before a heathen king, why should we ever think it is appropriate to wear the same clothing when we come into the presence of God that we would wear while mowing the grass?

Young men need to take special note of their attire especially when scheduled to perform some public duty in the worship assembly. When you perform in such roles, you have the heavy responsibility of leading and directing the minds of the congregation towards the Almighty God. Consider that your efforts in such capacities may be compromised simply because of your casual or sloppy dress.

Young ladies, please remember that how you dress also affects others at worship services. It is hard for a male to properly worship his God when a lady next to him or across the aisle is wearing some outfit that does not leave much to one’s imagination. During our worship, our minds need to be centered on God. If your attire causes the minds of others to shift from God to you, whether it is because your

clothing is too loose, too tight, too short, or too flamboyant, you are a stumbling block to others.

Let's Talk About Your Dress at Social and Formal Activities

Young people, please consider how you dress at social and formal events. No Christian has any business going to public swimming pools, private swimming pools with members of the opposite sex, or to any public beach where there is the possibility of viewing the immodesty of others. Males and females alike both need to think long and hard about the length of your shorts, even while sitting down. Shorts or skirts that reveal any part of the leg above the knee should not be worn. Priests were to wear "linen breeches to cover their bare flesh; they shall reach from the loins even to the thighs" (Exod. 28:42). God declared that it would be shameful to have the thighs of the priests uncovered. If you feel yourself constantly pulling down on your shirt, skirt, or shorts, they are probably too short. If you have to ask someone if what you are wearing is modest, it probably is not modest. If, in the presence of the elders you feel uncomfortable about your dress, your dress is most likely not appropriate.

Ladies, you need to consider your dress while serving in the roll as a bridesmaid or even as bride in a wedding when the time comes. Of all places, when you consider that God has ordained marriage and when you consider the purity of the bride and groom as they are united together, one would think that the marriage ceremony would be an occasion where godly, modest dress prevailed. Sadly, that is hardly the case. Dresses that reveal a woman's back or dresses that are low cut should never be publicly worn, even in a wedding. I am well aware that it may be hard to find modest wedding and bridesmaid dresses. I vividly remember the struggles my wife went through during the months leading up to our wedding trying to pick out modest dresses. Yet, I know it is not impossible because I have seen it done. It may require some diligent shopping or finding a creative seamstress, but it can be done.

Let's Talk About Your Dress While Performing in Athletic Events

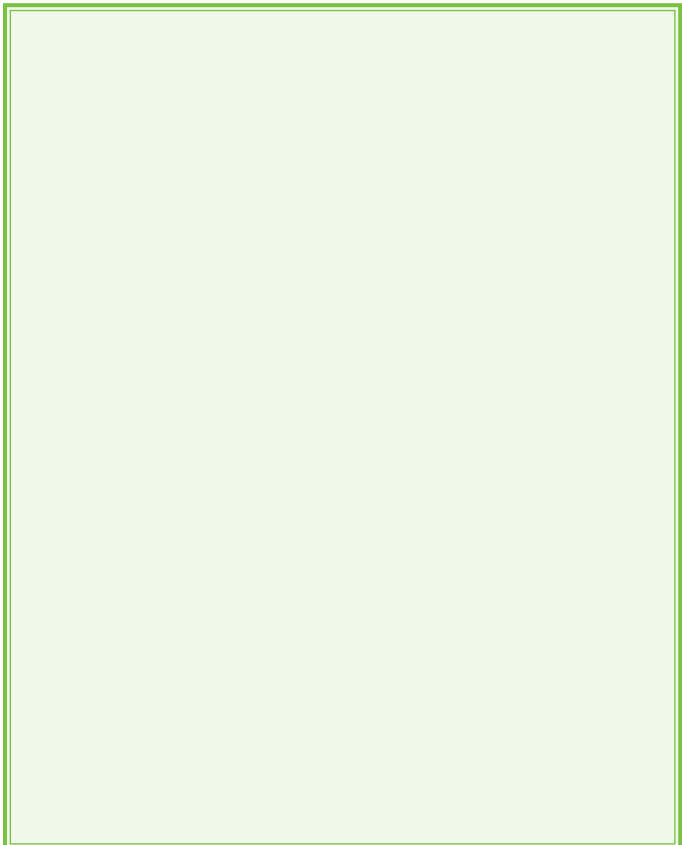
This is another time where it seems that Christians feel it is acceptable for them to throw God's views on modest dress out the window. Just because you are in sports does not give you the right to dress anyway you want. Consider what you will be required to wear before making a commitment to be a part of any athletic team and do not compromise your beliefs just to be a part of a team. You do not have to be an athlete to go to heaven.

Paul wrote to Timothy, "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). My goal in writing these things is based solely on my love for you. I remember with great detail fac-

The church is daily losing numerous young people to these schemes of the devil. These challenges must be met head on with the confidence that you can overcome any obstacle and temptation as long as you are armed with the strength and might of the Lord.

ing the challenges that also face today's teenager. Though I look back on many of those struggles and laugh, the challenges you face regarding your dress and other areas such as dating, sex, alcohol, and drugs are no laughing matter. The church is daily losing numerous young people to these schemes of the devil. These challenges must be met head on with the confidence that you can overcome any obstacle and temptation as long as you are armed with the strength and might of the Lord (Eph. 6:10; Phil. 4:13).

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Let's Talk About Substance Addiction

Stan Adams

Introduction

Addiction is defined by Webster as: “the quality of being addicted,” 2. A compulsive need for and use of a potentially habit forming substance (alcohol, nicotine, heroin); broadly a persistent use of a substance known to be harmful.” Addicted means “to devote or surrender to something out of habit”

The statistics are well known to most young people. The chances are that you have already been approached by someone with an offer to try tobacco, alcohol, or some other drug. Worldly people do not feel like any of these things are a threat, but that they can handle it without “getting addicted.”

Alcoholics Anonymous has a slogan, “to drink is to die.” That says it. There is no place for drinking in the life of anyone who wants to please God or have a good family life one day. Name one thing that alcohol has ever done for anyone? Name one thing that smoking does that is constructive? You name the drug and you will find that the end result of its use is nothing but sadness and a feeling of being trapped.

So, why does anyone want to do drugs? Many are curious and just want to experiment, but what they find out if they follow this course, is that these drugs are highly addictive and it is virtually impossible for anyone to be a user without becoming an addict. The real reason why anyone becomes drawn to these drugs is because they are in “pain” emotionally. They use these drugs as a way to escape from who they are and what they are feeling. Again, we must ask, what does a Christian have to be in pain about? Bad things may happen but to the person who has truly crowned Christ as the king of his life, there is nothing they cannot overcome or endure with Him by their side. Paul said he could do “all things” through Christ.

Tobacco is the gateway drug to all other drugs. Tobacco is highly addictive. There is not only one drug in tobacco that is highly addictive (nicotine) but several others including paint thinner. Why would anyone knowingly introduce these things into his body? Can you picture the Lord doing such? How about any of the apostles? How about Timothy?

You have probably heard the argument regarding the use of alcohol that the Bible only condemns drunkenness so you can take a little drink here or there if you want to as long as you do not get drunk. How does one start the process of getting drunk? Doesn't it start with the first drink? If it will work for alcohol, it will work for every other drug out there and all the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21. Can a person commit one act of fornication and it not be sin? What a silly argument to tell someone that as long as he does not “go all the way” in drinking that he will be alright with

the Lord and has committed no sin. Anyone who tells you such things does not care as he should for your soul and you should not heed his advice or counsel. People who give such advice do not know what they are talking about. 1 Peter 4:3 speaks plainly about the use of alcohol and condemns its use from the first drink. Again we say that there is no good thing that can come from the use of alcohol.

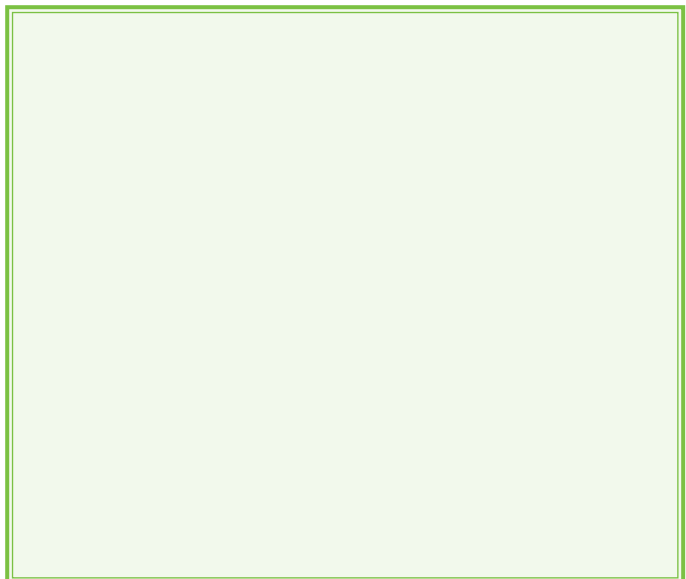
When it comes to driving under the influence of alcohol, are you aware of the consequences in many states if you are charged with DUI? First and foremost it is a sin, but in addition to that, on your first conviction in no-tolerance states, you will have your license suspended for six months, face a huge fine, be uninsurable (except in hardship cases), your car will be impounded for six months and you will have to undergo alcoholic counseling, face community service hours (500 or more) and have to deal with an increase in

There is no place for drinking in the life of anyone who wants to please God or have a good family life one day.

insurance rates for the next ten years, if anyone will insure you. All of this is if no one else is injured or killed, when you are involved in an alcohol related accident. If that is the case, then in most states you face a mandatory five years in jail for the first offence. You will always have to answer that you have had a DUI for as long as you live when you give interviews for jobs. All of this can happen to you just by taking the first drink. You never know if the first and only one will affect your driving. Remember it is not the falling down drunk guy you worry about on the highway, he is too sick to drive; it is the person who has had “just a couple” who thinks he or she is in perfect control of themselves. These are the types who kill others on the highways. How would you like to live with taking someone’s life, because you just wanted to “fit into the crowd.” You say it won’t happen to you? No one thinks it will. That is what makes it so dangerous.

The evidence is strong that some people have little or no tolerance for alcohol, and have a genetic tendency to be addicted to drugs, if they ever get them into their system. The sad thing is that one will never know if that tendency is there until something horrible has happened. The wise man asks, “Can a man take fire into his chest and not get burned?” Who do we think we are to think we are the exception to the overwhelming statistics? All the evidence from human and spiritual sources screams at all of us to “abstain” from all forms of sin. It leads only to heartache and hurt. It offers no comfort. The only comfort a drinker gets is from a cold toilet. Brain cells are destroyed from the first drink, and they do not come back.

It would be nice if I could say something in this article to stop you from going down the road to addiction, but the fact is that, if you do not love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, and “set in your heart” that you will do



what is godly in your life, then you will forever be drawn to the worldly ways of those who destroy you. You will buy into the “hype” about sowing wild oats when you are young.” You will believe those who tell you that folks like me are only trying to scare you and do not want you to have a good time. Young people, you can have a great time in life, and never get involved in the lifestyle of the world. Can a person who drinks say he really enjoys the guilt? Can a person who smokes say he really enjoys the smell of his clothes and car to others? Can the person involved in all of these practices truly say he enjoys the expense of their habits (a pack of cigarettes costs from \$2.75-3.50 per pack; a case of beer costs between \$15-30). Someone might say, “I am only a weekend drinker with my friends” (that type of drinker, statistically, is the most dangerous to others). This is the person who thinks he has control of his problem). These types, when shown videos of themselves in jail, cannot believe they could ever act so foolish.

Let me ask you young people? How would you like for your parents to come down and bail you out of jail? Would it make you feel superior? Suppose they cannot get you out of jail and you have to live for several years in a decadent environment where only the “strong” survive? Visit a jail sometime and see what type of person the wicked, vile inmates are waiting to welcome? What a price to pay for a “little drink.”

Look at the end of something before you decide to start down a road. Go to the cancer wards and look at what happens to a person who smokes. Do not spend your life thinking you will be the exception to the evidence. In England and other parts of Europe, cigarettes have on the back of the package “if you smoke this you will die.” How brutally honest. What is wrong with smoking? It is slow death and slow suicide. Suicide is sinful because it is murder. It is sinful to murder yourself (all at once or one smoke at a time). Hard drug addicts will tell you that nicotine is the hardest thing for them to give up. All other drugs a person can put up and never have a longing for, physiologically, but *tobacco products are the exception*. Emotional addiction comes with all other drugs and if a person introduces them into the system just once, he has to start all over on his program to give them up.

How much better never to start a process than to always think you are the one who will put the brakes on. Living your life with the concept that you are somehow stronger than anyone else who has ever battled with these things, is truly arrogant and does not bely the spirit of a Christian.

“Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (speak out against them, Eph. 5:11).

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Let's Talk About Sex

Chuck Bartlett

The Question

Why would anyone feel the need to discuss the subject of sex with young people? Like most moral issues, the world has a distorted view, therefore ignorance breeds confusion and confusion often leads to disaster. When God's people hear the word "sex" it sounds like a dirty word. The fact is, something that our heavenly Father intended to be pure and lovely, the ungodly have turned into something dirty and disgusting.

Getting the Right Information

The worst thing that a young person can do is go to the wrong place to find answers to questions about this topic. You can be sure that the ungodly often give the worst advice and guidance. Young people should go to their parents to find answers to their questions. Parents need to realize it is their responsibility to teach their children what God wants them to know (Eph. 6:4). Without using the Bible as their guide, fathers and mothers will not be of much help.

Teachers of the gospel of Christ, are also a good source to find answers to questions that arise concerning sex. Of course, they too need to set forth Bible based principles (1 Pet. 4:11).

Knowledge is the key. Everyone needs to be educated when it comes to sex so he can appreciate that which God ordained and not defile it.

Definition

Just what is "sex"? This may be hard to define because many people have different ideas as to what this means. For many, it means the act of satisfying fleshly desires. We must also consider things that lead up to this gratification. Terms like sex-appeal, sexy, and sexual behavior shed light on what we are dealing with. For the sake of space, we will not be dealing with related topics (homosexuality, pedophiles, and such like).

Biblical Definition

The word sex is not found in the Bible (KJV). In the Scriptures, the concept is brought forth in many ways. In a lawful marriage it is called affection (1 Cor. 7:3), to lie with (2 Sam. 11:11), to know (Gen. 2:24), to come together (Matt. 1:18).

There is nothing disgusting about the subject of sex since it is something that God ordained from the beginning (Matt. 19:4-5). The Hebrew writer stated, "*Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*" (Heb. 13:4). There is nothing embarrassing about the affection that a husband and wife express with each other.

Distorted Views

There are numerous misnomers created in the minds of our young people that need clearing up. Here are a few:

1. Sexual relations make a marriage. Having an outward attraction for someone does not mean you are compatible. This is one of the reasons marriages do not last. When people go into a life long commitment thinking that a physical attraction is all you need, failure is certain (i.e., Samson—Judges 14).

Society is putting so much emphasis on the outward appearance; it is sending the wrong signal to our young people. Although it is not wrong to look presentable, to dress sexy is to advertise your body to people. This cheapens your true value (more said later).

2. Sexual relations is love. Our young people are fooled by lying lips when they are told that, if you truly love someone, you must enter into sexual relations before marriage. Again, sex is not love, it is one of many ways that love can be expressed. However, this expression is designed for your husband or wife (i.e., Jacob, Gen. 29:15-20).

3. Sexual relations is a cure for all problems. Whether it be depression, low self-esteem, or any other difficulty, having sexual gratification doesn't make everything in your life better. Contrary to what people say, the pleasure of sin is short lived (Heb. 11:25). This is why a commitment to marriage is more than a physical attraction so couples can deal with the problems that will arise (i.e., Amnon, 2 Sam. 13:1-15).

Looming Dangers

Our society is bombarded with sex. It is on billboards, in magazines, at schools, in the workplace, in the supermarkets, on television, in movies, and the list goes on. There is very little left to the imagination today. The innocence of youth is fading with every generation. Therefore, what God has deemed as sin has become the norm, and many of our young people don't even realize that what is going on is wrong. Let's examine some of these evil influences by examining Proverbs 7:1-21.

1. Sexual conversation (vv. 16, 21). There are things that we should not be talking about. The one who wanted to seduce, used words that would cause the other's imagination to run wild. They might be "just words" but they are words that will destroy (Eph. 5:4, 5).

2. Sexual touching (v. 13). Not all conversations with someone is sexual, nor is all touching sexual. When brothers and sisters hug or shake hands, there is nothing amiss — but that doesn't mean there couldn't be. Sexual touching is wrong outside of marriage (1 Cor. 7:1).

3. Sexual atmosphere (vv. 9, 19). In this text, the woman said to the man, "*My husband is not home,*" and of course this was done at night. Young people need to know that dating is okay, but there is a high risk of danger when you spend time alone behind closed doors.

4. Sexual entertainment (vv. 7, 8). As much as we want to be upset with the crafty harlot in this text, Solomon points out that the vulnerable youth was somewhere he shouldn't have been. The world is offering pleasures that it wants you to think are harmless. What does it matter if you read, watch, or listen to sexual things? Not only does filling the mind with such create a desire to engage in sex, just filling the mind with it in itself is wrong (Matt. 5:28; Phil. 4:8).

5. Sexual attire (v. 10). How we dress says a lot about ourselves. It may not be our intention to dress sexy, but many of the modern day styles are designed that way. Just how can we know if we are dressing inappropriately? Here are three important questions to ask ourselves: Is it too tight? Is it too short? Is it too low?

6. Sexual justification (v. 14). This woman said she already paid her vows. Given enough time, the mind can

convince self and others, that any sin is okay. Even though someone may tell himself that he still believes in God and doesn't plan on abandoning him — no matter what, to go ahead and violate God's law by thinking such is nothing short of hypocrisy.

Abstinence

You can only imagine a teenager today in high school having to deal with the scoffing if people knew that he is a virgin. Peer pressure is strong and most young people think that parents have no idea how tough it is "out there." Parents need to make it their business to help their children through this tough period in their life.

Even though the majority may think "it strange" (1 Pet. 4:3) that you don't do what they do, there is wisdom in treating your own body with respect. Not only is fornication a sin against God, it is a sin against your own body (1 Cor. 6:18). When others make it their business to make fun of your conviction to remain pure, remember we ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

Not Making Light of Sex

It isn't the purpose of this study to belittle a natural desire that God has given mankind.

One of the reasons our young people need to discuss this subject is to help them see that sexual behavior is being made light of when it is done outside of marriage. God meant for it to be special, but there is nothing special about fornication.

Being attracted to the opposite sex is not sinful. When a person's hormones begin to stir within, there needs to be self control. This is often not done because people think they can handle temptations no matter how strong they get, so they don't "flee fornication." This is what our adversary, the devil, has been planting in the minds of man since the beginning of time (Gen. 3:6). King David was only looking but that led to his wanting (2 Sam. 11:2-4). When it comes to fleshly desires, be careful of its lure to ensnare you (Prov. 7:21-23).

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Let's Talk About Abortion

Jesse A. Flowers

Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted, because they are no more (Matt. 2:17-18).



Do you think this is a baby or a blob of tissue?

Let it be understood from the outset that this is not a pleasant subject to discuss whatsoever. However, just because a subject (such as abortion) may not be "pleasant" to think or talk about, does not mean it is not relevant and needful. Why talk about such a controversial and disturbing subject? Why? We do so for you, young people, *because we love you.*

What Is Abortion?

First of all, perhaps it would help us some if we would define our term "abortion." *The American Heritage Dictionary*: "termination of pregnancy and expulsion of an embryo or of a fetus that is incapable of survival; any of various procedures that result in such termination and expulsion. Also called induced abortion; the premature expulsion of a nonviable fetus from the uterus; a miscarriage; cessation of normal growth, especially of an organ or other body part, prior to full development or maturation; an aborted organism; something malformed or incompletely developed; a monstrosity."

Webster defines the term "abort" as: "to induce the abortion of or give

birth to prematurely; to terminate the pregnancy of before term; to terminate prematurely; to stop in the early stages."

The Methods of Abortion

The above definitions do not make abortion sound all that bad. In fact, it speaks of terminating "a fetus that is incapable of survival" and the "expulsion of a nonviable (not capable of surviving outside the mother's womb) fetus." These are not accurate definitions of abortion. They are at the very least misleading. In essence, abortion was defined as simply ending a mother's pregnancy early. The meanings given in no way do true justice to the subject of our study. Perhaps, the following descriptions of abortion will help to do so (Source: www.teenbreaks.com/abortion/whatis-abortion.cfm).

Suction Aspiration Abortion — first twelve weeks of pregnancy.

Most common method used, accounting for about 90% of abortions. Done in first twelve weeks of pregnancy. A hollow plastic tube with a knife-like edge on the tip is inserted into the womb. The suction machine (about thirty times more powerful than a household vacuum cleaner) is then turned on and begins to suck out the contents of the womb. Because the baby's bones have not hardened yet, pieces of the body are sucked into the jar.

Dilation and Curettage (D&C) Abortion — first twelve weeks of pregnancy. Similar to the suction abortion except a loop-shaped knife (curette) is used instead of the suction tube. The baby and placenta are cut into pieces and scraped out into a basin.

RU486 and Methotrexate — five to nine weeks of pregnancy. These are abortion drugs taken orally by the mother. When taken with another drug called prostaglandin, they are 90 to 95% effective in causing an abortion. RU486 works by preventing nutrients from reaching the baby through placenta, thus causing starvation within a few days. Methotrexate directly poisons the baby, causing his or her death.

Dilation and Evacuation (D&E) Abortion — first eighteen weeks of pregnancy. This procedure is used later in pregnancy after the baby's bones have hardened. A pliers-like instrument with knife edged teeth is inserted into the womb and a piece of the body is seized, twisted off, and removed. This procedure is repeated removing feet, hands, arms, etc., until the baby is entirely dismembered. If the head is large, it is crushed prior to removal. The body parts are then reassembled to be sure nothing is left in the womb to cause infection.

Salt Poisoning Abortion (saline amniocentesis) — after four months of pregnancy. Used infrequently now due to danger to the mother, salt poisoning was the most common method for late abortions. A large needle is inserted through the mother's abdomen and into the womb. A concentrated salt solution is injected into amniotic fluid surrounding the baby. The baby breathes and swallows the salt solution, is slowly poisoned as it burns away the outer layers of the skin, and dies. The mother then goes into labor and expels the baby within twenty-four to forty-eight hours.

Partial Birth (brain suction) Abortion — four to nine months of

pregnancy. Most partial birth abortions are performed in the fifth and sixth months of pregnancy. After dilating the cervical muscle over a two-day period, the abortionist reaches into the womb and grasps the legs of the baby. The baby is pulled entirely out of birth canal, with the exception of the head. Since the baby is clearly alive and moving, while the head remains inside, scissors are jammed into the base of the skull, and the blades are separated. A tube is then inserted, and the brain is sucked out. The now dead infant is pulled the rest of the way out, and the abortion is complete.

Some Startling Statistics

How heart wrenching to read of the unconscionable acts that mankind has become guilty of! It would be terrible even if such acts of violence and cruelty took place only once. However, the numbers of abortions performed here in the United States of America (supposedly the land of the free, home of the brave, and one nation under God) are completely nauseating. Why do we make mention of such things? *Because we love you.*

Abortion Statistics — World

- In 54 countries (61% of the world population) abortions are legal.
- In 97 countries (39% of the world population) abortions are illegal.
- There are approximately 46 million abortions conducted each year; 20 million of them obtained illegally.
- There are approximately 126,000 abortions conducted each day.

Abortion Statistics — U.S.

- Approximately 1,370,000 abortions occur annually in the U.S. according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute (majority of statistics listed here is from this source).
- In 2001, 1.31 million abortions took place.
- 88% of abortions occur during the first 6 to 12 weeks of pregnancy.
- 60% of abortions are performed on women who already have one or more children.

- 47% of abortions are performed on women who have already had one or more abortions.
- 43% of women will have had at least one abortion by time they are 45 years old.

Abortion Statistics — Decisions to Have an Abortion (U.S.)

- 25.5% of women deciding to have an abortion want to postpone childbearing.
- 21.3% of women cannot afford a baby.
- 14.1% of women said their partner does not want a child.
- 12.2% of women are too young (their parents or others object to pregnancy).
- 10.8% of women feel a child will disrupt their education or career.
- 7.9% of women want no (more) children.
- 3.3% of women have an abortion due to a risk to fetal health.
- 2.8% of women have an abortion due to a risk to maternal health.

The Truth About Abortion

Young people, these are the utterly disturbing and sickening facts about abortion that many people don't know about (maybe even you). And do you know why these various methods of abortion are not common knowledge? It is because the many who are in favor of abortion laws know more would speak out against the mutilating and killing of innocent babies. And so these atrocious acts are described as "pro-choice" and a woman's right and prerogative over her own body. Instead of referring to the child inside the mother's womb as a baby, it is simply called a "non-viable fetus." Rather than speaking of the baby as a separate life growing and developing inside the womb, he or she is spoken of as being nothing more than a big blob of tissue and mass.

What is the truth about abortion? Teenager, the truth about abortion is that it is the murder of innocent, helpless babies. And why these senseless, violent acts? Oftentimes teenage

girls or young women have yielded to sexual temptations and committed fornication with some young man (1 Cor. 6:18). Soon they find out they are pregnant, and a number of factors begin weighing on their minds. “My parents will kill me if they find out I’m pregnant!” “I’m way too young to start a family now, I’m not even finished with school yet.” “I don’t want this baby. I have my whole life ahead of me.” “I’m not even married, nor do I want to be. How am I going to afford a kid right now in my life?” (Teenagers account for about 30% of abortions.)

And before she knows it she finds herself contemplating having an abortion. And why shouldn’t she? After all she’s been told that it is her body, her life, her decision (1 Cor. 6:20). Furthermore, she keeps hearing that it is not really a life inside of her, it’s just a blob of tissue and unrecognizable mass. Finally, they say that abortion is not wrong because it is about the health and safety of women. Is that right? Let me tell you what it is really about young person. It is all about *selfishness*! Did you happen to notice that all the reasons given why a young woman wanted to have an abortion centered on what was best for her? The “surprise pregnancy” is an unwanted and unloved baby. It is nothing more than a big inconvenience to the young woman’s life, and all she wants to do is remove the problem. So for her and many others like her, abortion is the answer. How truly sad! Young people, abortion is the never the answer.

What Does the Bible Say?

For the child of God, or even one who is not, but has been taught to respect God and his inspired word, it is of the utmost importance to that individual to learn what our heavenly Father has revealed on this controversial subject of abortion. Young person let us consider a number of scriptural points together.

1. “Abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thess. 4:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:18; Heb. 13:4).
2. Respect human life (Gen. 1:26; 9:6; Rom. 13:9-10).
3. God’s concern for the unborn child (Exod. 21:22-25).
4. Rebekah — “But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If all is well, why am I like this?’ So she went to inquire of the Lord” (Gen. 25:22).
5. The prophet Jeremiah — “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations” (Jer. 1:5).
6. David the psalmist — “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being

yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Ps. 139:13-16).

7. Elizabeth’s baby, John the Baptist — “And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. . . . For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy” (Luke 1:41, 44).
8. Bought with a precious price (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

Let’s Make the Application

Teenager, how can you avoid ever having to contemplate abortion? Simple. Be resolved to abstain from sexual immorality (Dan. 1:10). Save yourself for one special person in the marriage relationship (Heb. 13:4). But what if you mess up, sin by committing fornication, and find yourself pregnant young lady? Then what? Well first of all, you need to repent with godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10) and plead for God’s forgiveness (Acts 8:22). Next, you must take further accountability and responsibility for the child inside of you (either by raising the baby or giving the baby up for adoption). Certainly, you do not want to compound your sin and guilt by killing the life within you!

Remember, this little one inside the mother’s womb (such as you were at one time inside your mother’s womb) is made in the very image of God. Furthermore, God, as the divine Maker, is responsible for forming our inward parts. Enclosed within the mother’s womb is a beautiful life from Almighty God developing and growing — kicking and even leaping for joy!

My youngest sister is currently pregnant with her first child. She and her husband are of course thrilled about this. Recently, she sent me pictures of her first sonogram. And even at this very early stage of her pregnancy (eleven weeks) you can easily make out the precious baby developing inside of her. In fact, the doctor informed them that the baby was waving his little hand back and forth. Of course, they concluded from this that they are going to give birth to a “super friendly baby.” Indeed, we are fearfully and *wonderfully* made!

Conclusion

One day all will appear before the judgment seat of Christ in order to give an account for their actions while upon this earth (2 Cor. 5:10). Some should be quite fearful about falling “into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). Those who have had any part in the murder of innocent babies have blood on their hands that cannot be washed off, save by the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:18-19, 22-23). One of the sins stressed in the Bible that is an abomination in the sight of God are “hands that shed innocent blood” (Prov. 6:16-17). Those found guilty of such by our righteous Lord on the judgment

Let's Talk About Your Language

Jason Hardin

Little kids love to explore. It is written into the fabric of their hearts. My three-year-old daughter Chloe is no exception. She can't wait for her next birthday party. The theme? *Dora the explorer*. Millions of children around the world strap on their backpacks and grab their flashlights every day with cartoon character Dora as she follows the same pattern in each episode: a dilemma, a goal, and three landmarks along the way. Why is such a repetitive cartoon so enormously popular? Because little kids, like Dora, never stop exploring.



As I write, the snow is flying outside of my office window. Cartoons were made for days like this. But ever so slowly, the indicators of spring are beginning to reveal themselves. And when the snow slacks off, the green grass grows, and the sun begins to shine, cartoon heroes are soon forgotten, the lessons learned over the winter have been stored, and it's time for a child to do some exploring all for herself.

day will find "their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Young person, we wanted to talk to you about this grievous sin of abortion for a very good reason . . . *because we love you* and want what is best for you. But as you know, far above our love, is the love that God and his Son Jesus Christ have for you (1 John 4:7-11). How shall the young secure their hearts? The psalmist answers: "by taking heed according to Your word" (Ps. 119:9).

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My family is fortunate enough to have a park that borders our property. There is something magical born in the heart of a child when the back gate is opened, you top the hill, and a seemingly endless landscape of adventure stretches out before you — perfect for exploring. But what happens when a child runs across something filthy? Something unfit to touch? Something inappropriate to pick up and horrifying (in the experienced mind of an adult) to put in your mouth? You don't have to stretch your imagination too far to know the kinds of things I'm talking about.

Why are parents so quick to sharply get their children's attention when they run across such things in their explorations? Why are "no," "don't," and "stop," such vital words to a parent's vocabulary? *Because they love their children.* It is care for his child that prompts a father to forbid his daughter from interacting with the filthy. It is concern that moves a mother to redirect her son's attention from the dirty to the harmless. Love seeks to prevent contact with the foul.

On a hot summer day, little girls and big fathers alike *need* a refreshing drink of water. As long as we go to the right source, it is beneficial, and even necessary, to replenish the parched with the pure. But if my daughter, on her way to the playground water fountain, decides to take a detour and fill her mouth with sand, I'm going to speak up. Mud in the mouth deserves some correction. Muck passing the lips will result in a rebuke. Why? Because a concerned father cares for his child.

And our heavenly Father is no different. We need water to survive. But I'm speaking of far much more than just the water of this world. With that as our only refresh-

ment, we are in constant need of replenishment. What we need is “living water.”

It was Jesus who revealed the depth and value of this well for all of humanity. To a woman of Samaria, in John 4, he affirmed, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (John 4:13-14). At the Feast of Booths, in John 7, “on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37-38). Divine refreshment is available for those who “thirst for righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). Pure replenishment has been offered to the parched.

But how our Father must shake his head when we stop short of the fountain of life for the mud and the muck of this sinful world. “Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance” (Isa. 55:1-2). Think of what our loving Creator has made so freely available, but marvel in your guilt at how easily we are distracted by the trinkets that will not satisfy. If you are a Christian, wonder in the magnificence of God’s care and concern for us as his children, but feel the sting of sorrow because of the filth that too often fills our mouths. Our Father loves us too much to sit idly by while we wallow in the mud and the muck. He is reaching out to us, rebuking, instructing, and encouraging us to set aside the foul for the pure.

A Matter of the Heart

His Son, Jesus the Christ, has perfectly modeled our Father’s original intention for mankind. Now, he beckons us to do more than admire his handiwork; he expects us to follow his lead. “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed” (1 Pet. 2:21-24). If I am ever going to improve in the way that I use my mouth, I must take two things seriously:

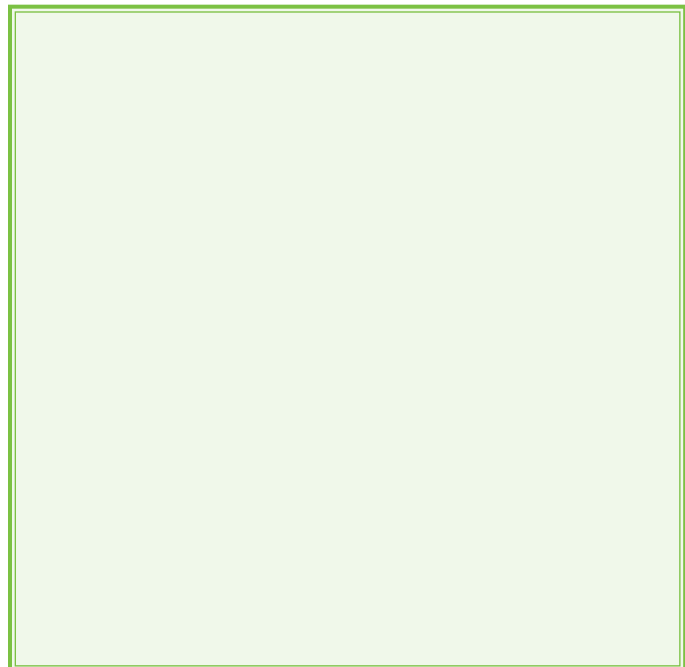
1. My Father, because of his love for me, wants me to leave behind the filth and seek that which is pure.

2. The problem is not with the muscle in my mouth, but with the blockages in my heart.

In Luke 6:43-45, Jesus affirmed, “For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills the heart.” Young person, grasp this point: *what is in your heart will determine what you say!*

That is precisely why James approaches this problem in the way that he does. “For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well” (Jas. 3:2). I have a problem. Your parents have a problem. Everyone that you know has a problem, including yourself. We all make mistakes in the way that we use our mouths, but the problem is not inherently with the tongue; the problem is with the heart.

“Now if we put the bits into the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and are driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires” (Jas. 3:3-4). How do I bridle my tongue? It has nothing to do with placing leather straps inside of my mouth and everything to do with restraining what comes in and out of my heart. What is the rudder that guides the direction of my tongue? The mechanism is my mind.



But how easily we slip off the restraints and leave no one standing at the wheel! “So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. For every species of beasts and birds, of reptiles and creatures of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by the human race. But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God; from the same mouth come both blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be this way” (Jas. 3:5-10).

James goes on to mention a number of areas in which you and I still get ourselves in trouble with our language: “bitter jealousy . . . selfish ambition . . . arrogance . . . lying . . . fighting . . . quarreling . . . conflicts.”

But couched in between the filth, is the stream of divine purity — the flow of “living water”: “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom . . . the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy . . . you do not have because you do not ask . . . Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us’? But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (Jas. 3:13, 17; 4:2, 5-8).

If I want to improve in the way that I use my mouth, I must be willing to listen as my Father uses those same words — “no,” “don’t,” and “stop” — that are so vital to a parent’s vocabulary. It’s time to drop the dirt. It’s time to flush out the heart. It’s time to stop wavering, making excuses, and rationalizing; it’s time to decide once and for all.

Where does this “wisdom from above” come from? James provides our roadmap: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting” (Jas. 1:5-6). Water can’t flow through a hose with kinks in it. And the living water cannot flow through a heart clogged with doubt. The path to improvement begins with submitting humbly to God and asking for his help.

As always, his Word can act “as a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Along the way I run across several significant landmarks:

The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined (Prov. 10:8).

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence (Prov. 10:11).

Wise men store up knowledge, but with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand (Prov. 10:14).

Where there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise (Prov. 10:19).

He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is considered prudent (Prov. 17:27-28).

He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles (Prov. 21:23).

Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him (Prov. 29:20).

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor . . . let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear (Eph. 4:25, 29).

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing (1 Pet. 3:8-9).

My daughter has reached the point where she understands what needs to go in her mouth and what has no place there. You also, know what needs to come out of your mouth and what has no place in your heart. The only question is, “Who will listen and act on what they know?” “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). An excellent question, and one that must be answered before the living water can freely flow.

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Let's Talk About Your Attitude Toward Authority

Greg King

Our attitude is important because it defines who we are. In order for you to be successful in life and be pleasing to God, the right attitude is necessary. You could be the most talented individual that has ever lived, but that talent will never make up for the wrong attitude. Our attitudes toward those in positions of authority will determine to a large extent our happiness not only in this life, but in the life to come. The right attitude will result in one being obedient, respectful, humble, sincere, loving, and thankful just to name a few. Life is more pleasant and God is well pleased when these characteristics shape our attitude.

No matter where you go or the position you hold in life, it will be necessary that you submit to authority. Throughout life we are under the influence of parental authority, civil authority, and divine authority — all of which are for our benefit. They provide us with direction, stability, motivation, and hope. Jeremiah said, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jer.10:23). A person’s ways are not his own; they belong to God. Man requires divine disciple and direction.

Parental Authority

Solomon said, “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is the grief of his mother” (Prov. 10:1). There are few things more obnoxious or repulsive than a defiant, disobedient, rebellious young person! On the other hand, there is absolutely no greater satisfaction than seeing a godly, obedient, spiritually involved young person. A young person who honors and shows respect for his parents is a blessing to his family and to himself. Ephesians 6:1-3 says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which

is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” Colossians 3:20 says, “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” These verses address the way the accountable young person is to respond to parental authority. God has prescribed an acceptable action; that which is “right.” Any other action is unacceptable to God and brings sorrow and grief to the entire home.

The word “obey” signifies a readiness to respond in a positive way to instruction, counsel, and correction. The command to obey refers to a continual action. Obedience is not a single act. It describes the continued action of one who has an attitude of submission even when Mom and Dad are out of sight. True obedience is characterized by action that is immediate, unquestioning, and to the letter! Obedience is necessary to build trust, respect, and responsibility.

God made it so that children were in a place of subjection in the home. In the home where God’s authority is respected, the children are not in charge. Where children dominate the home, God’s will is denied and chaos reigns. God says, “obey your parents in all things,” not just when you feel like it or when your parents are around. God is the one who established the chain of authority in the home. If children do not submit to their parents God is not pleased and our homes are not the happy places that they should be.

When we are younger our view of our parents is often mistaken and immature. Mark Twain wrote, “When I was 16 I thought my father was stupid. When I was 21 I couldn’t believe how smart he had gotten in just a few years.” I used



to become irritated with my parents because I thought they didn't understand. Finally I realized that it hadn't been that long ago that they were teenagers facing the same things I was facing. The instruction and guidance that was being provided was to keep me from making the same mistakes that they made, therefore keeping me from harm. The authority that I was defying was meant to protect me and help keep me from consequences that I was too immature to see. Think for a moment about the young people you know who have complicated their lives, ruined their lives, destroyed their minds and bodies, or even lost their lives because they would not listen and obey their parents. No wonder the Bible describes a disobedient youth as "foolish."

Sadly, I have heard some say, "My parents don't deserve honor and respect." This is ingratitude. Some are blind to what their parents deserve. It should help you a great deal to realize that your parents love you and want you to do what is right. The Proverb writer puts it this way, "My son, if your heart is wise, My heart will rejoice indeed, I myself; Yes, my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak right things. Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day" (Prov. 23:15-17). You need to understand what grief you bring to your parents when you are not what you ought to be. Many parents have been devastated by the defiant, disobedient, ungrateful attitude of their children. This is why your parents are concerned about you associating with the "wrong crowd." They are concerned when there is evidence of a lack of interest in the gospel and a lack of desire to live as a Christian should. They are concerned when you pattern your life after the world in word, dress, and action. They are concerned when you display an attitude that defies their parental authority.

Children, obey your parents. God demands it, you need it, and your parents desire it. Jesus was an honor to his parents (Luke 2:51). The little maid in Naaman's house was an honor to her parents, just like Joseph, Daniel, Timothy, and others. People know you by the kind of life that you live, your habits, and the crowd with whom you associate. Proverbs 20:11 says, "Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right." In the words of David's prayer, "O God give our sons and daughters perfect hearts to keep thy commandments" (1 Chron. 29:19).

Civil Authority

One day you will no longer be under the authority of your parents, but no matter how old you are or where you live, there will always be civil authorities to which one must submit. Like that of parental authority you may not always agree, but you must remain respectful and seek to live peaceably in our society. God's word teaches,

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities

that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom *fear, honor to whom honor*" (Rom. 13:1-7).

This of course is speaking of a normal functioning government and not an evil one. In Paul's letter we find that we are to be "subject to the governing authorities." His reason is clear, "the authorities that exist are appointed by God." In other words they have been established or instituted by God. They exist to serve his purpose. However, not all fulfill the purpose for which they were established. When civil government tries to force or persuade its citizens to do wrong and violate God's law then we "must obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29).

God established civil governments for our benefit. Paul tells us that they were given to protect and encourage the good as well as restrain and punish those who do evil. The person who is respectful and law abiding has no reason to fear the civil authorities. 1 Timothy 2:1-3 teaches us, "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior."

Divine Authority

Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the *years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them* (Eccl. 11:9-12:1).

You are very valuable in the Lord's service, and are precious in his sight. God intends for you to enjoy your youth. It should be a time of joy, pleasure, and innocence unencumbered with the anxiety of older years. However, the pleasure is to be had with God in view, remembering that God will bring you into judgment. The foundation for a happy and pleasurable youth is God. You must remember that you are not here simply by accident; you had a Creator! Some cry out that you are the church of tomorrow, but you

are also the church of today. You have a vital role in the work and growth of the Lord's body. Let your light shine daily and be an example. Paul told Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:12-16).

Authority is the right to exercise power. Jesus said, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). Life is to be lived and enjoyed, but lived and enjoyed with the knowledge that we are going to be judged by the word he has spoken (John 12:48). 1 Peter 4:11 states, "Whoever speaks, (is to do so) as one who is *speaking the utterances of God.*" This passage simply means that the things you say are to come from God's sayings or, in other words, by his authority. Colossians 3.17 states, "Whatever you do in word or deed, (do) all in the name of the Lord Jesus." "In *the name of the Lord Jesus*" means in accordance with his will or by his authority. In the words of the commentator R.C.H. Lenksi, "absolutely everything is to be done in the light of the revelation of our Lord and harmonize with that revelation." God prohibits us from adding to his word (Rev. 22:18), subtracting from his word (Rev. 22:19),

changing his word (Gal. 1:6-9), or going beyond his word (2 John 9).

The example of Nadab and Abihu serves as a very important example for us today in regards to rendering worship to God and acting under his authority. Leviticus 10:1-3 states, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the Lord spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace." When they offered in worship something the Lord had not commanded, it was taken by the Lord as a sign of disrespect for his holiness and they paid the ultimate price. Such examples were written for our learning (1 Cor. 10:11).

Conclusion

It doesn't matter whether the authority is parental or civil it all centers around God's word. When you have the proper attitude toward God's word you will by default have the proper attitude toward other sources of authority. While we may not understand the reason behind the decision or request of those in positions of authority, we can rest assured that it's probably for our benefit.

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“Dating” continued from front page

Setting Reasonable Dating Standards

Whatever dating standards you and your parents determine are appropriate, they should be thoroughly discussed and in place before you begin dating. Waiting until after you have begun dating will be too late and allow you to form unhealthy dating habits. Share your dating standards with all prospective dates. If you know that there are places you are not permitted to go, whether prohibited by your parents or yourself, make sure your date knows this before the date. To do otherwise would be unfair. If your date is unwilling to spend time with you according to your standards, then he really doesn't care much for you and certainly doesn't respect you.

Who to Date?

One of the most critical decisions to make prior to dating involves who you will date. If you choose someone who shares your core values, then many of the other critical choices will take care of themselves. Here are a couple of biblical principles that you might want to consider when choosing who you will date:

Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals (1 Cor. 15:33).

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? (2 Cor. 6:14).

These passages should help you appreciate the importance of making careful, cautious decisions about those with whom you choose to associate. Paul warns us not to be deceived about this matter. Think you're strong enough to resist the influence of friends or dates who do not share your biblical morals? Think again! Do not be deceived!

Does this mean that you should only date Christians? Not necessarily. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul wrote: "I wrote in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of the world . . . for then you would have to go out of the world." Dating someone who is not a Christian is not forbidden by the Scriptures, but if you do choose to date a non-Christian be aware of the potential dangers.

Are you having trouble finding someone to date? Then "go fish"! Visit other congregations, attend gatherings of young people in other communities. Expand your horizons.

What Are You Going to Do on a Date?

Perhaps you are familiar with the chimney corner scrip-

ture, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop." When it comes to dating these words are certainly true. When planning what to do on a date, be sure to plan enough to keep you busy for the duration of the date. If you stay busy you are less likely to occupy idle time with activities that might lead to compromising situations.

When choosing what to do on a date, remember that you should not light a fire that you can't put out. Even better — why light it in the first place? Why choose activities or places that might encourage sexual arousal or make self-control more difficult to practice? The time to look for a fire escape is before the fire begins!

How Much Physical Contact?

This is a tough one. It is unrealistic and unnecessary to expect that you will have no physical contact on a date.

Holding hands, hugging, and kissing may be perfectly acceptable, or they could be the prelude to sexual immorality depending on the maturity of the people involved. Each person is going to have to develop some carefully considered guidelines for oneself.

I have talked to some young people who seem to be of the opinion that it is perfectly sane and reasonable to go just as far as they can without committing sin. This is dangerous! You will be tempted to go just a little farther and a little farther until you

have gone all the way and then wonder how you got there. Why push yourself to the limits when there is the very real danger of falling off? I've talked with many heart broken young people who played sexual "Russian roulette" only to regret the pain they caused themselves and others. For the sake of your physical and spiritual health, set sane, reasonable limits that will keep you far away from the edge.

The Bible tells us to "flee immorality" (1 Cor. 6:18), "abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thess. 4:3), and to not even let immorality or impurity be named among you (Eph. 5:3). All of these passages argue for careful limits that will keep one away from the kind of physical contact that will arouse one sexually.

When considering how much physical contact is appropriate, try answering these questions:

1. How far would I go if Christ were in the room?
2. Think of someone who really respects you — someone you would never want to disappoint. What would he think of you if he saw you doing whatever with your date?



3. Is there the possibility of you regretting what you have done?
4. Am I being fair with the other person?
5. Would I want my son or daughter to do the same thing?

Dating should be fun. It should be exciting. It should be carefree. If the time you spend together leaves you enriched, encouraged, relaxed, if it brings glory to the Lord, then you know it is time well spent.

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“**Music**” continued from p. 2

Do you see the connection? Songs are a significant part of God’s plan to transform us.

Unfortunately songs can exert a different kind of influence. Al Jolson sang, “What care I who makes the laws of a nation. Let those who will take care of its rights and wrongs. What care I who care for the world’s affairs as long as I can sing its popular songs?” (*Let Me Sing And I’m Happy*). The point of this verse is that popular music has a far greater influence on culture than the laws of the land. A great deal of that influence has been bad.

I suppose there has always been music that is inappropriate for the Christian. However, there has been a sharp decline in recent history. In an article entitled, “Breaking Moral Barriers One Song at a Time,” Al Menconi noted the following progression:

1. In 1964 the Beatles sang “I Want to Hold Your Hand.”
2. In 1967 the Rolling Stones sang “Let’s Spend the Night Together.”
3. In 1976 Rod Stewart sang “Tonight’s the Night.”
4. In 1981 Olivia Newton John sang “Let’s Get Physical.”
5. In 1987 George Michael sang “I Want Your Sex.”
6. In 1991 Color Me Badd sang “I Wanna Sex You Up.”
7. In 1994 Nine Inch Nails sang something that I can’t repeat in any company.
8. In 1998 Janet Jackson redid Rod Stewart’s “Tonight’s the Night” without changing the lyrics. This time it was about two women (www.almenconi.com).

The accompanying moral decline in our society is so evident that no documentation is necessary.

Do Not Be Conformed to the World!

While there are no instructions in the Bible that speci-

cally address modern music, there are plenty of principles that clearly apply. Lets start with Romans 12:2. Paul writes, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect” (NASU). Paul wants the Roman brethren to see that if they are going to change the way they behave they must change the way they think. Modern music carries a message. In general its message is the message of the world. (I know there are exceptions.) Country music is notorious for “drinkin’ and cheatin’ songs.” Rock and pop are notorious for themes about sex and drugs. Hip-hop is notorious for almost every vile practice imaginable. In other words, most modern music is trying to conform us to the world.

Someone may say, “I’m not actually going to do any of that stuff.” Even if we accept that, this music is wrong. Paul says “immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (Eph. 5:3-4, NASU). Immorality (fornication) and impurity should not even be mentioned among Christians. They most certainly should not be turned into entertainment. If they are turned into entertainment, they cease to become abhorrent to us. I may indeed say, “I would never have sex out of wedlock or get drunk.” I may feel that way now, but how will I feel after a week of listening to someone tell me how wonderful it would be to “spend the night together”? How will I feel about it after a month or a year? Our attitudes can be changed. Do you remember what Paul said in Romans 12:2? If you are listening to music that encourages immorality it *will* have an impact on your thinking. Your thinking *will* have an impact on your behavior. You will be conformed to this world. It won’t happen all at once, but it will happen and I would hate for it to happen to you.

What If I Ignore the Lyrics and Just Listen to the Music?

I have heard a number of people say, “I really don’t pay that much attention to the lyrics.” I don’t believe that it is



possible to listen to music on a regular basis and not hear anything. As a matter of fact, I suspect that the people who claim not to pay any attention to the lyrics are the same people I see singing in their cars. I wonder how they sing

those songs they don’t know the lyrics to?

Even if you could ignore the lyrics to every impure song on the radio, it wouldn’t solve the problem. Imagine if I told my friends that I am a Christian. The next time they see me they hear Mick Jagger squalling, “Let’s spend the night together. . .” they will come to one of two conclusions.

They will think casual sex is not that bad if a “Christian” is endorsing it or they will think I’m a hypocrite. Either way my influence is severely damaged. How can I talk to them about self-control and purity while I am publicly endorsing impurity?

What Should I Do about the Music I Listen To?

I hope you see that your choices about music have a profound effect on you and those around you. Now it is time for that uncompromising commitment to purity we talked about. Jesus said, “If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where *their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:47-48, NASU). I’m sure that, like me, you really enjoy the music you listen to. I’m sure it will be difficult to give up some of the music you enjoy so much. However, I want to tell you that no song, no band, no artist is worth sacrificing your soul for. Your moral and spiritual purity is too important. You are going to have to make the tough choices.

My suggestion would be to test all of the music you listen to against the following biblical principles:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21, NASU).

Any music that encourages any of these behaviors must go. I should also point out that this list is not complete. Note that Paul includes “things like these.”

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Phil. 4:8, NASU). If the music you are listening to does not accomplish any of these ends it needs to go as well. Your spiritual growth is too important.

I want to stress again that you need to apply *both* of these standards to *all* of the music you listen to. It would be a good idea to memorize these verses so that you can carry your standard with you.

When you have done this I suspect that, like me, you will find some of the music you love isn’t fit for Christian consumption. Do yourself and everyone else a favor and destroy it. Please don’t give it away. If you do, you are only putting a stumbling block in front of someone else. Follow the example of repentance in Acts 19:18-19. Don’t stop there, however. Your friends will probably notice the

difference. Don’t let them wonder; tell them about your decision. It will help to rebuild your influence as well as your purity.

I sincerely hope that you will take these biblical principles to heart. I hope that you will strive to be holy as God is holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16). May God’s richest blessing be yours as you strive to serve him.

jsl66@kconline.com

Field Report

Sequim, Washington

A new work has begun in Sequim, Washington, on the Olympic Peninsula. If you would like to contact someone there, call Tom Keaton at 360-582-9321.

At present they meet at the American Legion Hall at the corner of Sequim Avenue and Prairie Street. Their times of assembly are: Sunday — 10:00 and 11:00 and in the evening at 6:00. On Wednesday they meet at 7:00 at the Pflaum home. Please call Richard Pflaum at 360-683-2152 for address and directions.

This congregation is looking for a full-time preacher. If interested, please call Jason Teller at 360-681-2081.

Quips and Quotes

Church of England Will Consider Women Bishops

“London — Eleven years after the Church of England first began ordaining women as priests, its governing body voted on Wednesday to consider allowing females to become bishops.

“The vote was a victory by reformists over objections by conservatives and evangelists. It came at a time when disagreements over the issue of homosexuality have deeply divided the church into similar factions.

“The vote on Wednesday, the third day of the four-day General Synod, means that when the governing body holds its second and final synod this year in July, it will vote whether to start the legislative process needed to open the office of bishop to woman. Even if that is done, it could be years before the first woman priests becomes a bishop” (The Indianapolis Star [February 17, 2005], A12.

More Clergy Abuse Claims Filed

“Washington — Roman Catholic leaders said Friday they received 1,092 new abuse claims against American priests and deacons last year, even after they had already paid more than \$800 million in settlements during the long-running crisis over predatory clergy” (The Indianapolis Star [February 19, 2005], A4.

Parents Worry Less on Kids’ Drug Use

“New York — While today’s parents were more likely to have used drugs than in previous generations, they see less risk in drug experimentation and are less likely to speak with their children about it, according to a survey released Tuesday.

“The study of parental attitudes toward teen drug use, conducted by The Partnership for a Drug-Free America, found that barely half of the parents would be upset if their children experimented with marijuana.

“The number of parents who have never spoken with their children about drugs was 12 percent, double what it was just six years ago, the survey found.

“While most parents no longer use drugs — 11 percent reported marijuana use in the last year — they still carry attitudes fostered during their teen years, researchers found. This is particularly true of parents who were teenagers in the late ‘70s and early ‘80s, when teen drug use was at a high point” ((The Indianapolis Star [February 23, 2005], A10.

Assisted Suicide to be Reviewed

“Washington — Granting a request by the Bush administration, the Supreme Court said Tuesday that it would decide whether the Justice Department may bar doctors from prescribing lethal doses of drugs to terminally ill pa-

tients who have chosen to die under Oregon’s Death With Dignity Act.

“The court said it would review a lower court’s decision preventing enforcement of a 2001 statement of Justice Department policy by then Attorney General John Ashcroft. That directive said assisting suicide was not a “legitimate medical purpose” under federal drug-control law and that the Drug Enforcement Administration could strip the prescribing rights of any physician who authorized drugs to help someone die” (The Indianapolis Star [February 21, 2005], A5.

Replacing Gay Troops Cost Military \$200 Million

“Washington — The military has spent more than \$200 million to recruit and train personnel to replace troops discharged for being openly gay in the last decade, a new congressional study has found.

“The review by the Government Accountability Office, an investigative arm of Congress, was requested by more than 20 lawmakers who were concerned about the costs of the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy instituted in the Clinton administration, particularly for service members with ‘critical occupations’ and ‘important foreign language skills.’

“The accountability office plans to release its review on Friday. The New York Times obtained it from a member of Congress who had requested the study.

In the last 10 years, more than 10,000 service members have been discharged because they did not keep their sexual orientation to themselves as required, according to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a gay rights group that monitors the armed forces” (The Indianapolis Star [February 24, 2005], A5.

PREACHER NEEDED

Bridgeville, Delaware: The Kent-Sussex Church of Christ, which meets in Bridgeville, Delaware, is looking for a full-time preacher that is willing to work with a small congregation. The fields here are ripe. This congregation is the only faithful group of the Lord’s people in the state. This could be considered “missionary work” on American soil. A desire to do personal work is a must. The congregation consists of only a few members, but they are willing to support getting the word out to their community. The current evangelist is moving to Tampa in July 2005. If you are interested, please contact Tim Fannin (302-934-8903), tfannin@irsd.k12.de.us or Bill Dykes at (302-855-1305).

Urichsville, Ohio: The church of Christ in Urichsville, Ohio is seeking a preacher to come work with them. At present they have sixteen members and about twenty-five present on Sunday morning. You would need some financial help. If interested, contact Carl Rummell at 740-498-6677 or Warren Rummell at 330-339-3032.

Second Annual Truth Magazine Lectures

July 11-14-2005

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Convention Center

The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:50	What About Islam and the Qu'ran? Kyle Pope	Is the Biblical Text Reliable? John Smith	Are There Lost Books of The Bible? Mark Mayberry
9:00 - 9:50	Evidences: Unity of Bible: Steve Wallace	Evidences: Prophecy: Kevin Maxey	Rody Gumpad
10:00 - 10:50	Addictive Behaviors Pornography: Steve Wolfgang	Addictive Behaviors Substances of Abuse: Art Adams	Addictive Behaviors Gambling: Joe Price
11:00 - 11:50	Creation: Dan King	Genesis 3: Paul Blake	Genesis 6-8, The Flood: Tom O'Neal
Lunch Break			
Ladies Classes			
10:00 - 10:50	Bette Wolfgang	Teaching Children to Respect Authority: Sherilyn Mayberry	Creating Peace At Home Violet McDaniel
Auditorium			
2:00 - 4:00	Open Forum		Elders & Work of the Church
Singing 7:00 - 7:30 — Lead by R.J. Stevens			
What Does the Bible Claim For Itself? Donnie V. Rader	Is the Bible Adequate to the Modern World? Walton Weaver	Oh How Love I Thy Law: Johnie Edwards <i>(After Wednesday evening Bible Study)</i>	First Century Morals for the Twenty-first Century: Andy Alexander



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