
Scriptural Wisdom and Practical Help for Surviving Troubled Times

SEXUALITY

"YE ARE ALL GOD'S TEMPLE"

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**SEXUALITY...
... "YE ARE GOD'S
TEMPLE"**

OVERVIEW

The Problem

Somebody once remarked that if God had to do it all over again, He would make humans sexless because of all the "hassles." Yet, God did create human sexuality. He created humans with the capacity to not only biologically reproduce, but to also experience pleasure in the act of sexual intercourse. However, like many divine institutions, humans have blighted sexuality with sin and human despair, failure, manipulation and selfishness, or as the woman put it, "hassles." Furthermore, sexuality has been corrupted and perverted. However disgusting or heinous we may find these problems to be, they unfortunately exist in our community. People need help and Scriptural wisdom and the Father's mercy in overcoming these sins.

Author William Graham Cole pointed out in one of his books that sexual sins are unique in one important aspect:

Stolen goods can be returned, or compensated for, lies can be retracted and corrected, covetousness can be overcome. Even idolatry can be undone and forgiven. But the sex act once committed with another person cannot be undone. The inter-personal relationship has undergone a radical change, and the couple concerned can never return to where they were before. Something indelible has stamped them both.

What does this mean? It means that sex is an area where you really can't afford to be casual or careless, an area where if you have any wisdom at all you will look and look and look again before you leap.¹

Many are seduced into thinking that there is a better way than God's. Many people have sadly learned the bitter truth:

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.²

¹ Quoted by Norman Vincent Peale in, **Sin, Sex and Self-Control** (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 87.

² Proverbs 16:25

Sexuality... "Ye are God's Temple"

Humans are sexual beings. Regardless of whether we're single or married, we struggle with issues of sexuality. Unfortunately, this struggle has been intensified in our Western culture. Dr. Pitirim Sorokin, the first professor and chairman of the Sociology Department at Harvard University, wrote that, "Our civilization has become so preoccupied with sex that it now oozes from all pores of American life."³ However, as one writer put it, the "real world of sexuality is very unlike *Playboy*: it includes tragedy, loss, and aloneness along with comedy, pleasure and triumph. Vulnerable people need wisdom."⁴ We need biblical wisdom in the area of sexuality as we need it elsewhere.

Christian disciples don't have special flesh. Consequently, we share in common many of the same problems that our contemporaries do, including sexuality. William Masters and Virginia Johnson have reported that at least 50 percent of marriages are flawed by some form of sexual maladjustment or dysfunction.⁵ Therefore, it's probably safe to assume that many marriages among believers are also plagued with sexual maladjustment or dysfunction.

Jeremiah had disdain for the leaders of his day who "dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious" (Jeremiah 6:14, NIV). As disciples, many of us have wounds, some visible, some not. Regardless of the nature of the wound, it must be tended to, or else it will worsen. Sexual problems are usually, not always, symptomatic of greater problems which need correction. Failure to attend to these problems can result in fractured marriages. A failure to adhere to biblical sexual standards will ultimately destroy a person, a family, a community and a nation.

One of the most forceful teachings of the Old Testament is "the Balak Strategy."⁶ Israel's enemies could only triumph over Israel if Israel allowed itself to be morally defiled. The most prevalent apostasy in the Old Testament was Baalism.

The worship of this Canaanite god and the other Canaanite gods such as Ashteroth and Baalim centred around the worship of sex in all its forms, including the worship of the human genitalia. Numerous tablets, statues and engravings have been found at the Ras Shamra archaeological site depicting their obsession with sex.

Of course, this "Balak syndrome" is still true. Today, believers are besieged by a war on the family. Jeremiah

wrote that "the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can

³ Pitirim Sorokin, *The American Sex Revolution* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1956), p. 19.

⁴ Tim Stafford, "Great Sex: Reclaiming a Christian Sexual Ethic," *Christianity Today*, Vol. 31, October 2, 1987, p. 27.

⁵ William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, *Human Sexual Inadequacy* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1970)

⁶ Numbers 22-25

understand it?"⁷ Not surprisingly then, all of us – to some extent -- employ various defensive mechanisms in an effort to avoid examining ourselves. These mechanisms include:

- rationalization
- justification
- scape goating
- re-directing blame
- denial
- repression
- lying

Historically, our community has not openly dealt with issues of sexuality very well or very often. Some of the reasons are actually valid. Sexual intercourse is inherently a very private and intimate act. It's also something very sacred. Unlike the world, we view the matters of sexuality with a sense of reverence and holiness. It is not something to be profaned, perverted or debased.

On the other hand, many disciples, especially those new to the faith, wrestle with issues concerning about what is right and wrong in the arena of sexuality. All too often this void has not been filled with sound biblical exposition. Rather, too many only voice mere opinions. Yet, even where the Bible does speak, we fail to provide some of the sound, pragmatic reasons why God's ways are best. Our young people have become especially vulnerable to the "lies" of our peers.

While the Apostle Paul wisely counseled us to be "wise unto that which is good, and simple [harmless] concerning evil,"⁸ the writer to the Hebrews also implored us to have our "senses exercised to discern both good and evil."⁹ Furthermore, even the Lord Jesus Christ himself counseled us to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."¹⁰ Certainly we want to refrain from discussing sexuality in just a biological manner. We do well to avoid graphically talking about sex, especially those behaviours that are immoral or distasteful. In a limited sense, ignorance is bliss. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.'"¹¹

On the other hand, we don't want to avoid exposition or discussion altogether because the void will be filled with partial or faulty information. This "silence" can result in disastrous consequences too.

How do we reconcile these two positions? Simple. We should exhort and encourage one another to

⁷ Jeremiah 17:9, NASB

⁸Romans 16:19

⁹ Hebrews 5:14

¹⁰ Matthew 10:16

¹¹ Romans 7:7

"...cease to do evil; [and] learn to do well..."¹² We should also learn to discern or understand why certain behaviours are sinful, harmful and unhealthy for us. Not every disciple is spiritually mature enough to accept a "Thus saith the LORD." Sometimes, we also have to supply reasons why certain behaviours are wrong. As you see in this section, there are reasons outlined against every deviant sexual behaviour as well as reasons why we should pursue God's ways.

Some may also argue that, as the Apostle Paul wrote, "it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."¹³ Yet, in the preceding verse, Paul exhorts believers to "reprove" the "unfruitful works of darkness."¹⁴ On the surface, it seems like a contradiction. But it isn't. The word "speak" in Ephesians 5:12 is the Greek verb "lego" which has the connotation of describe or narrate. So, in fact, Paul isn't counseling us to talk about the "unfruitful works of darkness" but rather to reprove them. In addition, he also adds that it is a "shame" to narrate or describe them. This is wise counsel. Narration of ungodly acts will not keep us "simple concerning the ways of evil." On the contrary, they may pique the curiosity of some. Suffice it to reprove them with reason.

We're exhorted to provide people with a "reason of the hope" that lies within us. It can be deduced therefore that we can equally provide people with reasons why we don't believe in something. God's ways are best, even those principles which ought to guide our sexual conduct.

Scriptural Wisdom

See appropriate section for biblical references.

Biblical References

See appropriate section for biblical references.

Practical Help

Unfortunately, many times "sinners" are strictly counseled "to just stop it." The method that many of us use for overcoming sin can be aptly described as "white knuckling" (pure will power) or the "Avis" method of overcoming sin -- just try harder! For some people this works. For many it doesn't. We have a responsibility to "feed the flock" and help them escape the danger of the secular wolves that hound us.

¹²Isaiah 1:16-17

¹³Ephesians 5:12

¹⁴Ehesians 5:11

The shepherds of Israel were soundly denounced by Ezekiel because:

Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them."¹⁵

Certainly we don't want to be classified as this type of shepherd. But if the extent of our counsel is merely "Just say No!" or "Don't do it!" we are not fulfilling our mandate to feed the flock in the appropriate manner. Below are some general principles that will be especially helpful in counseling a brother, sister or friend who struggles not only with sexual problems but with all sin.

The Toolbox of the Biblical Counselor

The goals of counseling and church discipline are fourfold:

1. overall welfare of the ecclesia
2. restoration of the sinner to righteousness
3. reconciliation between sinner and brethren and God¹⁶
4. freedom from guilt and shame"¹⁷

There are five common words pertaining to "counsel" in the New Testament:

1. *Parakaleo*: to beseech, exhort, encourage, comfort (see Romans 12:1; Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
2. *Noutheteo*: to put in mind, warn, confront (Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 3:16)
3. *Paramytheomai*: to cheer up, encourage (1 Thessalonians 2:11; John 11:19, 31)

¹⁵Ezekiel 34:3-4

¹⁶"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought [something] against thee: leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matthew 5:23-24)

¹⁷John White and Ken Blue, *Church Discipline That Heals: Putting Costly Love Into Action* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), pp. 23-24.

4. *Antechomai*: to cling to, to hold fast to, to take an interest in (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13)
5. *Makrothumeo*: to be patient (Matthew 18:26, 29; Hebrews 6:15; James 5:7)

Combined, these words provide a biblical definition of what it means and takes to counsel another brother, sister, teenager or friend.

In order to be spiritually helpful, an effective, biblical counselor will employ all of these attributes at one time or another.

The Perfect Counselor

The Lord Jesus Christ was and is the greatest counselor of all. Pattern your counseling after the Lord's, and you will be effective. He excelled in counseling primarily for the following six reasons:

1. He knew what was in man's heart; he understood human nature.
2. He had the ability to cause introspection with his ability to ask precise, soul-penetrating questions. Next, he also was a great listener.
3. He really cared for those he came into contact with.
4. His close relationship with His Father provided Him with a strong biblical basis on which to draw spiritual insight.
5. He knew what people needed to do to change, and he knew how to motivate them to want to change.

6. He had spiritual balance: he knew when to be directive and when to be indirect. He knew when problems rooted in the past had to be dealt with, and he knew when and how present problems had to be addressed.¹⁸

Imperfect Counselors

There's something to be said for vicarious learning. We can learn how not to counsel from the example of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar and their running discourses with Job:

¹⁸Frank B. Minirth and Walter Byrd, *Christian Psychiatry* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1990), pp. 211-212.

1. They were talkers, not listeners. Their advice, although eloquent at times, was impractical, too directive for Job's mind set, and too legalistic and dogmatic.
2. They were accusers. They didn't seek understanding, nor did they display empathy.
3. They were proud. Meekness is a prerequisite for dispensing counsel.
4. Perhaps most importantly, their concept of God was inadequate or too small. They failed to see God's greatest glory and power -- that of mercy, grace and compassion.

Here are some basic principles, by no means exhaustive, to bear in mind when sharing advice or providing counsel to someone in need:

Abstinence

"Abstain from all appearance of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Avoid Gossip

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the ecclesia: but if he neglect to hear the ecclesia, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. (Matthew 18:15-22)

"He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." (Proverbs 17:9)

Compassion

"[Jesus as high priest) ... can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way: for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." (Hebrews 5:2)

Confession

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Directives

This is nothing more than straightforward, direct advice. The Lord Jesus Christ used this method as did Solomon

Fear

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." (Jude 21-23)

Flight

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

"Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (2 Timothy 2:22)

Forgiveness

"And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil." (Luke 11:4)

Friendly

"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." (Proverbs 17:17)

Gentleness

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Timothy 2:24-26)

Help

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

(James 2:15-17)

"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:17-18)

Holiness

"For God hath no called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." (1 Thessalonians 4:7)

Humility

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)

"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." (1 Peter 5:5-7)

Indirect Techniques

Stories, parables or questions can help others discover insights about themselves and their problems.

Judgement

"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." (John 7:24)

"Judge not, that ye be not judged." (Matthew 7:1)

Reconciliation of these two passages:

In the John 7:24 passage, Jesus is telling us to not to be critical of others, and don't look down upon them and think that you're better." The same word "judge" ("krino") in Matthew 7:1 is used in the context of be discerning and don't jump to hasty conclusions.

Listening

See the example of Elihu in Job 32.

Love

"Hate stirreth up strife: but love covereth all sins." (Proverbs 10:12)

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." (Luke 7:47)

Mercy

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (James 2:8-13)

Prayer

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)

Repentance

"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death."
(2 Corinthians 7:10)

Self-Disclosure

The counselor may wish to share an example from his or her own life if it will help the troubled person. The Apostle Paul used this technique quite effectively in 2 Corinthians.

Take Initiative

"...Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me." (Matthew 25:45)

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Tough Love

"But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (1 Corinthians 5:11)

"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15)

Understanding

Both the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul wisely advised us against judging people too quickly or by cursory surface looks. What you see is not always "cut and dried." For example, a 1982 study revealed that as many as 80 percent of rapists were abused as children and suffered "a kind of emotional death" as a result of that trauma.¹⁹

In a study of 118 female chemical abusers, 44 percent were victims of incest and 75 percent reported that they were sexually abused before age 9.²⁰

In a study of 200 street prostitutes, 75 percent stated that they had been raped as children.²¹

It's been said that "the child is the father of man." Children carry deeper psychological and emotional scars with them into their teenage and adult years. Sometimes this hurt is manifested in sinful behaviours. For example, physical and sexual abuse and juvenile delinquency go hand-in-hand: 97 percent of male hard core delinquents suffered severe physical punishment and assault in their homes. These maltreated teenagers are also 24 more times likely to commit arson and 58 more times to commit rape than other teenagers.²²

Although your initial inclination may be to withdraw from such people, don't. The Lord Jesus Christ had the wonderful ability to be "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners"²³ yet be extremely kind, loving, compassionate and gentle to sinners who his contemporaries abhorred and avoided. You can make a difference in a "sinner's" life. Many of the so-called "low lifes" or "deviants" of our society are victims of equally horrific crimes and sins. They

¹⁹ David Gelman, "The Mind of the Rapist," Newsweek, July 23, 1990, p. 47.

²⁰ J. Densen-Gerber, "The Big Issue," Odyssey House (July 1977)

²¹ T. Elias, "Young Female Prostitutes," The Press, Vol. 10, no. 5 (October 1982).

²² J. Garbarino and W. Groninger, Child Abuse, Delinquency, and Crime (Chicago: National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse, 1983)

²³ Hebrews 7:26

don't need stern, harsh judgments as much as they need love, forgiveness and direction in holiness.

"But the LORD said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart."

1 Samuel 16:7

Combination of Directives and Indirect Technique

Usually, counsellor will begin with indirect technique, then provide direct advice from the Bible. This is the method Nathan used to help David discern the nature and gravity of his sin, followed by a direct confrontation (2 Samuel 12).

The Ecclesia is a Hospital

Cultivate an attitude in your ecclesia similar to that of a hospital where injured sinners are being rehabilitated into becoming glorious saints. Therefore, continually monitor yourself for self-righteous or legalistic tendencies:

"But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but then that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."
(Matthew 9:12-13)

Intervention Groups

If needed, form an intervention group to confront crisis. Consult the appropriate professional counsellor, e.g. alcoholism, on how best to intervene in a crisis situation. Don't do this unless you've been directed on how best to handle the situation by a professional counsellor or therapist.

Support Groups

Ideally, your ecclesia or a subset of it should act as a support group. In the event that that type of support isn't available for whatever reason, investigate possibilities of participating in a support group in which you feel comfortable.

Professional Help

Sometimes, it is appropriate to refer a troubled brother or sister to a professional therapist. None of us are totally equipped to handle the plethora of different problems, especially in the arena of sexuality. The only caveat would be to seek out a professional therapist with a similar world view and Christian ethic.

Success Stories

See appropriate section for biblical or extra-biblical accounts.

Brotherhood Contacts

Brother Bill Yake

Brother Steve Shuman

Brother Don Ifill

Note: Please contact Bill Yake on any of the subjects or related areas for further information.