

What is Marriage: Questions Answered Part 2

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SEX

What is sex, is it just a physical act? Marriage is oneness: God joins the husband and wife for life, Matthew 19:6. This oneness has its fullest expression in sex, which is the unique way in which God creates oneness between the husband and wife, Genesis 2:24. However, it is not simply physical; it is two lives uniting mind, body and soul, Song of Solomon.

Who's a candidate for marriage? If God gave you sexual desire, then He intends for you to marry. He does not want you to burn sexually, 1 Corinthians 7:7–9.

Is there such a thing as celibacy? Yes, and it's not a choice. It's a gift from God, 1 Corinthians 7:7–9.

Should you feel guilty if you enjoy sex? No! It is no accident that sex feels so good; this is how God designed it. Therefore, God wants sex to be thoroughly enjoyed by the husband and wife, Song of Solomon 5:1—at the end of the verse God is urging the couple to “drink deeply” of each other's sexual intimacy.

Is it OK to deprive one another? Yes, but both must agree to it and understand why they are doing it. If both agree, then they can deprive each other sexually in order to focus on ministry. But it must be for a specific length of time and it must not be too long, otherwise they may fall into temptation and sin, 1 Corinthians 7:5.

What's allowed in sex? God prohibits the following: adultery, sex before marriage, homosexuality, bestiality, solo-sex, and incest. Aside from these God wants us to be intoxicated with each other sexually in marriage, Proverbs 5:19; Song of Solomon 5:1.

What if the sex just isn't good anymore? If you find the sex life in your marriage boring, then you haven't been making love, you've been having sex. Sex as a physical act eventually does get boring, unless you keep changing partners, which leads to many other problems. Sex is not just a physical act; it's supposed to bring oneness to your marriage. That is, it's supposed to involve your mind, body and soul.

What's wrong with enjoying sex before marriage? God is crystal clear about where sex belongs. It belongs in marriage and nowhere else, Deuteronomy 22:13–30. God is so clear about this that in Deuteronomy 22:28–29, two single people who had sex were forced to marry and they could never divorce.

Is it OK to have sex by yourself? No! Sex is not a solo sport. It is meant to be enjoyed with your spouse, Genesis 2:24. Additionally, your sexual intimacy does not belong to you, it belongs to your spouse (or future spouse), Proverbs 5:15–17; 1 Corinthians 7:3–4. Therefore, to engage in sex by yourself is to rob and abuse the sexual intimacy that rightly belongs to someone else.

Why should I remain sexually pure before and after marriage? The answer to both is the same: your sexual intimacy belongs to your spouse and no one else, Prov. 5:15–17; 1 Corinthians 7:3–4. Thus, it's not only before marriage that you need to protect it. You need to guard it after marriage, which means that there's no such thing as "innocent flirting."

Is it OK to use outside sources to spice up a dull married sex life? All of your sexual fantasies and desires are supposed to be fulfilled by your spouse not a video image or magazine picture, Proverbs 5:18–20. Additionally, getting 'turned on' by someone other than your spouse is lust, which is the same as adultery, Matthew 5:28. Finally, if your sex life is dull, why don't you address the real reason behind this?

What if you're attracted to the same sex? You must realize that this is against God's created order regarding male/female sexuality. You may've had external influences, e.g., sexual abuse as a child, but they are just that, influences. They don't determine your behavior, you do. God understands that it may "feel" like you were born this way, but you were not. All of us are naturally inclined to sin and rebel against God's order, homosexuals are no exception, Romans 1:21, 26–27. Thus, if you're attracted to the same sex, realize that you're rebelling against a loving God who wants to and can free you from this, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11.

How do you control sexual desire while waiting for God to provide you a husband/wife? You will be able to control it up to a point, but after that God expects you to marry and abandon your self-control, 1 Corinthians 7:9. So there are two things that will help you control it: (1) realize that before marriage you are supposed to control it because sex is not merely a physical act, it's a sacred bond that unites the husband and wife mind, body, and soul, and (2) realize that God does not want you to control your sexual desire forever. Once you can no longer exercise self-control, God expects you to express it within marriage, 1 Corinthians 7:9.

FINANCES

What does God say about money? First, look at it in terms of useful wealth instead of dollars/money. Second, God says that wealth is His gift and blessing, Ecclesiastes 5:19. But we must be careful how we handle it and pursue it, Proverbs 21:17; 1 Timothy 6:9–10. God also says many other things, e.g., don't just think about yourself, Proverbs 13:22, and when it comes to wealth God wants us to first seek His kingdom, Matthew 6:33. If we follow God's advice and use our wealth to serve Him, then we will have a guaranteed everlasting retirement, Luke 12:33.

What does God say about financial planning? You should not go through life without a financial plan. You need to have a financial plan that provides for your future, Proverbs 6:6–8; 10:5; 27:23–24. It should take into account such things as income, expenses, savings (short-term, e.g., 6 months' worth of living expenses, and long-term, e.g., retirement), long-term goals (e.g., house, college funds, retirement), and short-term goals (e.g., car, furniture, school clothes).

Should we budget? Yes, budgeting will reveal where you're wasting money that could be saved (for retirement, emergencies, etc.) or used elsewhere (e.g., a vacation). And do not think that budgeting is only for those who are rich. Budgeting can help everybody, including (and sometimes especially) those with moderate or low income. God expects you to be wise about the wealth you do have, Proverbs 10:5, regardless of the amount.

Is it OK to have separate accounts? The main principle of marriage is oneness, separate bank accounts works against this. If you currently have separate bank accounts, work towards eliminating them. Agree together on a budget and how to pay for it. Make all financial decisions together and slowly eliminate all separate accounts. Whatever the reasons were for the separate accounts, address them with God's central command in mind: he puts her interests before himself and she respects his authority, Ephesians 5:21–33.

How should couples dating approach money matters, who should pay for the date? This involves more than money issues; it involves intimacy. When you first begin dating someone, it's a good idea to pay your own way so that no one feels obligated either way. Once the relationship is established, i.e., mutual attraction is acknowledged, then the man can begin paying for the dates or you can agree to take turns paying.

How financially stable should I be before marrying, can I marry if I don't own a house? There is no mandate in Scripture that a man (or woman) has to own a house before marrying. However, you should be financially stable, i.e., together you should be able to independently support your new family unit financially. Additionally, you should ensure that your future spouse has a biblical understanding of finances and is going to be of the same mind regarding budgeting and planning your financial future.

PARENTING

What's the responsibility of parents? Parents are responsible to prepare their children for life, but not according to just any instruction. They must prepare them according to God's wisdom, Deuteronomy 6:6–9; Ephesians 6:4. God also commands parents not to discourage their children by exasperating them, Colossians 3:21.

Is having children a command, i.e., must a married couple have children? Having children is a blessing from God, Psalm 127:3, but it's also a command, Genesis 1:28. Although pregnancies are sometimes unexpected, do your best to plan for your family, financially and otherwise. Additionally, having children does not mean that they have to be yours biologically. You can have children through adoption.

Can I use timeouts instead of spanking my kids? In short, yes, because the goal of spanking is to solicit the child's obedience. Thus, if a timeout will work, then use it. However, if your child refuses to obey with timeouts (or is gaming the system because he/she knows that all they will get is a timeout no matter what they do), then you must spank them as prescribed by God, Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15.

Is spanking child abuse? No, it is not. In fact, God says the opposite. He says that not spanking your child is child abuse, Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 23:14. Additionally, we should spank our children the way God spans us: (1) make sure they know why they are getting spanked, (2) they must repent and ask for your forgiveness, (3) if others are involved, they must ask for their forgiveness, (4) the punishment must fit the crime. Sometimes it will be a timeout, other times a spanking or something else, (5) always spank them out of love not anger, malice or anything else and make sure they know this, and (6) make sure that you remember the purpose of your discipline: it is one way you teach them to live godly lives. Finally, remember, they broke God's commands not yours.

How can parents avoid sorrow and grief when it comes to their children? Children can refuse to obey your instruction, Proverbs 13:1, and thereby cause you sorrow. However, if you refuse to instruct them in God's wisdom, then it will be to your grief and sorrow, Proverbs 17:21, 25. Thus, teach them God's way and they will bring you joy, Proverbs 29:17.

Should you let your kids make their own decisions? Yes, but they should make them with your guidance because children left to their own devices will bring shame to their parents, Proverbs 29:15.

How do you show love towards your children? If you love your children, then you will instruct them in the way they should go, Proverbs 22:6. If you refuse to teach and discipline them, then you show your hatred for them and are planning their demise, Proverbs 13:24; 19:18.

When should you start teaching kids about marriage? Parents should begin teaching their children about life at a very young age, as soon as they're able to comprehend instruction, Proverbs 4:3–4. However, the instruction you give them must not be a theological treatise. It should be something that they can relate to and understand.

DATING

What's the purpose of dating? Since dating involves intimacy (mental, emotional, and physical) and since intimacy belongs in marriage, dating should be done with marriage in mind. Additionally, those who are married should continue dating in order to keep their intimacy alive, i.e., they should continue to show love for one another this way.

What should you look for in a spouse? First, you should not marry a non-Christian, 2 Corinthians 6:14. Second, look for the central command of marriage, self-sacrifice (Ephesians 5:21–33), i.e., are they selfless or selfish in how they treat you, their, friends and family, and life in general? Third, is Christ the center of their life, i.e., are they actively walking with God or part-timing Him?

Will God provide me a spouse or should I go looking for one? Unless God has given you the gift of celibacy, 1 Corinthians 7:7–9, you are meant to marry, Genesis 2:18. However, you and God work together. As you look for a spouse, God works in your life to provide you one. If you make foolish decisions in the process of looking, you may prolong your singleness.

Should a young man or woman go on dates? That depends, since dating is for the purpose of marriage, are you looking to get married? If the answer is “no,” then you should not be dating. Additionally, do you understand that your intimacy and theirs (mental, emotional, and physical) needs to be protected, which means that you do not share your intimacy without a mutual understanding of what the relationship is?

Is it OK to go past first base when dating, i.e., how much physical intimacy is OK while dating? We're not supposed to look for the “sin” line in order to see how close we can get to it. Additionally, it is not God's desire that we burn sexually, 1 Corinthians 7:3, 7–9. Rather, it's His desire that we enjoy sex thoroughly, Song of Solomon, but within the confines of marriage. Therefore, to do anything (kissing, touching, etc.) that arouses sexual passions is a foolish and wicked thing to do. Protect your sexual intimacy; it's sacred and belongs in marriage.

How close should “friends” be? Dating is for the purpose of marriage. Therefore, dating a “friend” is not a wise idea. Since God designed the sexes to be attracted to each other, sooner or later you will share enough intimacy that it will affect your friendship and the way you feel about each other. Thus, respect your intimacy and theirs.

Is it OK to use internet dating services? Culture enters into this. In some cultures, dating and marriages are arranged by the parents. In America individuals are in control and they have access to things like internet dating services. Internet dating in and of itself is not sinful. But like anything else available to Christians, it can become sinful. Therefore, the question is not whether you use an internet dating service, but how you use it.

Is it OK to look for a beautiful woman/handsome man, i.e., is it OK to be concerned with looks? God designed the sexes to be attracted to one another and we all have our own preferences, looks and otherwise. So it is not a sin to be attracted to certain physical characteristics, whether a beautiful woman or a handsome man. However, if beauty is the only thing that you're concerned with, this is sin and you will reap what you sow.