



Is It a Sin If I...? (Part II)

Colossians 3:17: (NASB) *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.*



As long as no one gets hurt, I can do pretty much whatever I want! Such is the battle cry of our present age. We are so advanced in our awareness and thinking, it has become easy to throw off the once constricting values of ages gone by and just be in the here and now. In our last “Is It a Sin if I...” episode, we looked at things like how we dress and adorn ourselves, cross-dressing and gambling. On this episode, we look at some deep issues regarding the expression of our human sexuality. When it comes to sex, there are many hard questions that require diligent answers.

Our diligence will be firmly centered around applying biblical teaching to our very advanced world today. The clear scriptural answers we will uncover are destined to trigger major tensions with those around us.

In Part I, Episode #1240, we discussed several important foundational points about sin and established that we were applying the biblical principles and our comments to those striving to be footstep followers of Jesus.

We continue with specific questions our listeners have messaged us through the Christian Questions app or emailed us at inspiration@christianquestions.com.

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Again, we are directing these comments to a Christian audience. This is a very pointed question with a very pointed answer.

There are several reasons someone wanting to be a dedicated Christian may not wait for marriage. **They might say:**

1. I am not convinced it is a sin.

Sex outside of marriage is completely normalized in the media.

In Part I, we talked about how contemporary issues we face may fall into gray areas the Bible does not specifically address. This IS NOT a gray area. We will address this as we continue.

2. I do not believe it is that BAD of a sin.

I love Jesus, but I also have sexual desires. That does not make me evil. After all, sex often involves “love” or at least something similar.

How can love - or at least “a lot of like” - be that bad?



It comes down to the principles of following God through Christ. This is not about how we feel; it is about what is right before God.

3.

I believe God will forgive me as long as I try hard not to do it again.

In this case, we might pray something like, *God, please help me to stop doing this...but just not today.*

The problem is, “..*but just not today.*” We are engaging in willfulness when we do this.

4.

Sometimes I just want what I want.

It takes too much energy to fight it. We have tunnel vision in the moment when we know it is wrong, but we do it anyway.



"cognitive dissonance" The psychological term for this kind of thinking is “cognitive dissonance.”

(Source: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/cognitive-dissonance>) The theory of cognitive dissonance proposes that people are averse to inconsistencies within their own minds. It offers one explanation for why people sometimes make an effort to adjust their thinking when their own thoughts, words, or behaviors seem to clash with each other.

This helps us to justify, look for loopholes and compartmentalize our thoughts in order to eliminate the uncomfortable mental conflict and guilt we have when doing what we know to be wrong.

Biblical Principle: The power and position of marriage was stated in Genesis at creation and was clearly verified by Jesus as THE SOLE STANDARD for human relationships and sexuality in God's eyes.

Matthew 19:4-6,9: (NASB) ⁴And he answered and said, Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.

One man and one woman to become *one flesh* - created as sexual beings. This is a straightforward picture of their union.

⁹And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for **immorality <4202>**, and marries another woman commits adultery.

Jesus was introducing the idea of immorality; we will expand on this in a moment. We are not going to discuss divorce, but will talk about acts that are outside of what God intended and what Jesus said we were to follow. Anything outside of this we see qualifies as “immorality.”

Is there a clear “Thou shalt not have sex before marriage” statement? Let's look closer.





There are five words that describe *immorality/fornication* in the New Testament. They are all related and tell a complete story. Each of these five words have the word “porn” in them, related to our English word “pornography,” so we know this is not going to be good.

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #4205 *pornos*; from *pernemi* (to sell, akin to the base of 4097); a (male) prostitute (as *venal*), i.e. (by analogy) a debauchee (libertine)

“venal” means capable of being bought or obtained for money or other valuable consideration

“debauchee” means a person given to excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures

“libertine” means a person, especially a man, who behaves without moral principles or a sense of responsibility, especially in sexual matters

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #4204 *porne*; feminine of #4205; a strumpet; figuratively, an idolater

“strumpet” means a woman who has many casual sexual encounters or relationships - note: this word figuratively means an idolater

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #4203 *porneuo*; to act the harlot, i.e. (literally) indulge unlawful lust (of either sex), or (figuratively) practice idolatry

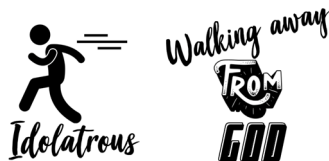
Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #4202 *porneia*; harlotry (including adultery and incest); figuratively, idolatry

Sexuality outside of its appropriate place is idolatry because it worships the created rather than the Creator

Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #1608 *ekporneuo*; to be utterly unchaste

This last word is only used once:

Jude 1:7: (KJV) *Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication <1608>, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*



All of these define sex outside of marriage, and they all come down to being idolatrous - walking away from God. This is not just doing something we are not supposed to do - it is doing something that keeps us walking away from God.

To understand these words and thereby understand a clear answer to the sex-before-marriage question, we need to see them in action.

These texts use four of the words and clarifies their meanings:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: (ASV) *⁹Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither **fornicators <4205>**, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

The word *fornicators* is that basic Greek word *pornos* we talked about above - a person given to excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures. Here it is, right next to *idolaters*. It is interesting that when describing those who will not inherit the kingdom of God, the first word on the list is *fornicators*. The Apostle Paul draws our attention to this misuse of our humanity.

¹¹And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the spirit of our God.



Paul began by using the basic, masculine form of the word *fornicators* - the meaning of which goes beyond “prostitute” to people who extend themselves sexually in inappropriate ways.

He will now expand to all forms which define forbidden sexuality and behavior for Christians in a wide sense:

1 Corinthians 6:13,15-16,18-19: (NASB) ¹³...the body is not for **immorality <4202>**, but for the Lord... ¹⁵Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a **prostitute <4204>**? May it never be! ¹⁶Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a **prostitute <4204>** is one body with her? For He says, The two shall become one flesh. ¹⁸Flee **immorality <4202>**. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the **immoral <4203>** man sins against his own body. ¹⁹Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

Here is a dramatic description of something important. *Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but if we do this, we sin against our own body. Our body is a temple of the holy spirit - what are we doing with it? Immorality is an obvious major contradiction to all things godly. ALL immorality is included in these scriptures. All immorality brings us to idolatry.*



This is why the first commandment is Exodus 20:3: (KJV) *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.* It is surprising how much idolatry is intertwined with sexual immorality. If we are serious about our commitment to God, we certainly do not want to break the most basic and important commandment.

We may think that because our age is an age of sexual acceptance and freedom, that the biblical guidelines are therefore obsolete. NOT SO! In Paul's time promiscuity was very common, especially among Gentiles.

In the next verses, Paul advises how to counteract their promiscuity he had witnessed:

1 Corinthians 7:1-2: (NASB) ¹Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. ²But because of **immoralities <4202>**, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband.

Paul knew the Corinthian church came from Paganism and had to grow into the purity of the Christian call. His admonition was to get married! STOP with the sexual promiscuity and idolatrous behavior, as it is against God.

Here is the equivalent of “Thou shalt not have sex before marriage.”

The Apostle Paul lays out both the problem (immoralities) and the solution (one husband + one wife).



For Christians, it is simple but not necessarily easy. Sex belongs only in marriage. If we are truly followers of Jesus, then we are bound to the simplicity and clarity of marriage being our only biblically-sanctioned physical union in the eyes of God.

This is straightforward and clear. Are we listening?

Like it or not, the Apostle Paul zeroes in on the definitions for what is acceptable and what is not. What is our response?



If sex is only supposed to be reserved for marriage, then why did some have several wives and concubines in the Old Testament?

Even though the Bible does not give a straightforward answer to this, we can be sure of several things. First and foremost, Jesus unequivocally uses the original standard of one wife + one husband as the absolute standard for his followers. Whatever God allowed in the Old Testament simply has no relevance to those who follow Christ.



Why did God allow men to have more than one wife?

It did not take long because already by Genesis 4:19, Lamech married two women. Then we have the examples of Jacob, David, Solomon and others who had multiple wives and even concubines.

Just because God allowed it does not mean it was okay. Jesus told us in Matthew 19:8 that God allowed divorce because of the hardness of their hearts, but He was not pleased with it. God may allow actions He does not endorse so that sin can run its course.

Biblical Principle: When we are looking for “loopholes” in scriptural principle, we are really looking for personal convenience. As Christians, our lives are not to be built on convenience, but on compliance with God’s highest principles.

We would love to find biblical technicalities to justify our questionable behavior. It helps us tamp down our discomfort when we know deep down what we are doing is wrong. “Aha! Solomon got to sleep with more than 700 women! Well, there you go!”

Many say the Bible is “full” of examples of polygamy, and therefore exceptions are acceptable. We believe God did NOT endorse polygamy, but He did tolerate it.

Consider this:

- There are few examples of polygamy in the Scriptures, most notably among kings in the Old Testament. In all of those examples, there was resulting dysfunction and unhappiness. It seemed this never ended well.
- There are NO Christian examples of polygamy. Marriages were only one man + one woman. We follow the Christian example.

Moses prophesied to the people (long before they crossed the Jordan River) that there would come a time when they as a nation would want a king.



He listed several guidelines for this coming change, including:

Deuteronomy 17:17: (NASB) *He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.*



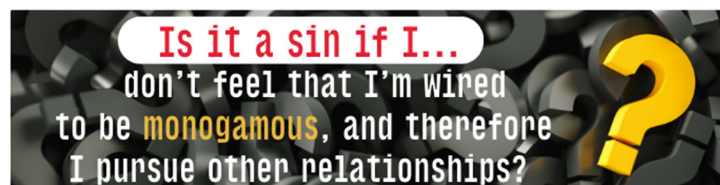
God did not want Israel to have kings, but they demanded it anyway. God said these kings *should not* have multiple wives, but they did not listen. God, therefore, was not in favor of polygamy in the Old Testament, but He allowed it - along with the many other sinful things.

God warns about wrong courses but allows the natural consequences of our actions and free will to take effect.

Speaking of our link between sex and idolatry, the greatest evil to come out of Solomon having so many wives was that he started worshipping idols.

(Source: Bible Commentary by Matthew Henry on 1 Kings 11:1-9) There is not a more melancholy and astonishing instance of human depravity in the sacred Scriptures...Solomon became a public worshipper of abominable idols! Probably he by degrees gave way to pride and luxury, and thus lost his relish for true wisdom. Nothing forms in itself a security against the deceitfulness and depravity of the human heart. Nor will old age cure the heart of any evil propensity. If our sinful passions are not crucified and mortified by the grace of God, they never will die of themselves, but will last even when opportunities to gratify them are taken away. Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. We see how weak we are of ourselves, without the grace of God; let us therefore live in constant dependence on that grace. Let us watch and be sober: ours is a dangerous warfare, and in an enemy's country, while our worst foes are the traitors in our own hearts.

This is so sad, predictable and preventable. It is hard to get a more graphic connection between immorality and idolatry than the life of Solomon. He ended up worshipping idols through the mess he created by marrying multiple foreign wives. This was not at all sanctioned by God.



Monogamy is a broad term. There are different types of monogamy for mammals. For example:

(Source: www.sciencefocus.com) ...We are termed 'socially monogamous' by biologists, which means that we usually live as couples, but the relationships aren't permanent and some sex occurs outside the relationship.

For our discussion, we are defining "monogamy" as one man + one woman keeping sexual relations within their marriage.

Biblical Principle: Christian thought and behavior are not built on fulfilling our most base human desires. On the contrary, our thoughts and behaviors are built upon reaching upward and becoming beings of love, integrity and discipline.

Christopher Ryan, Ph.D. and author writes, “We rarely only have one sexual partner for our entire life. We have sex for reasons other than procreation, and the human desire to experiment is far too great to limit ourselves to one sexual partner in our lives.”

This communal “we” makes it sound like this wonderful justification. However, this describes someone who is never satisfied. Pornography, by the way, feeds a “never enough” attitude.

Let’s look at some of the reasons why some men say they are not meant to be monogamous.



“Love and sexual attraction is almost the same for men.



Because most men fall in love when they see attractive females, they always feel like wanting more than one woman.”



Are we creatures of base instinct or creatures of discipline and choice? As Christians, we are supposed to follow the words and teachings of Jesus. If Jesus speaks on the subject, we should answer, *Yes, sir!* Are we following him or allowing our base instincts to rule us? Are we idolaters?

Matthew 19:5-6: (NASB) ⁵...*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?* ⁶*So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.*

We have choices in our sexual behavior. But part of the equation is how young children are growing up with the normalization of having multiple partners. A huge problem with pornography is the way it trains the expectations of impressionable boys and girls.



“Men have always been polygamous throughout history.”



You will also discover that men were ALSO always monogamous!



In fact, some say, it is only society and not biology that determines whether or not people are monogamous. It is advantageous for society as a whole, for example, to have a stable, two-parent household, so this has been valued - at least in the past - to stay monogamous.

When the statement is made that polygamy has existed throughout all of human history, and so therefore should be the norm, the same could be said for murder!

Throughout history, there have also been times when monogamy has been greatly valued. A Christian does not water down principles to make an excuse to indulge in their own desires.



Biblical history shows monogamy was the norm for the last 2,000 years:

1 Timothy 3:1-2: (NASB) ¹*It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.* ²*An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.*

This sets our standards - not the world's standards. We stand up for Christlike standards, following where Jesus leads.



“Male libido drops when he commits to one woman.”



There have been studies that show, married or not, men involved in committed relationships have a lower testosterone level.



True or not, what about male devotion, commitment, caring and cherishing their wives, developing the safest place in all of their lives? What about the male response to female love and affection? Sex in marriage has trust and love as its foundation. The people who make statements like those we have quoted do not understand the richness and purity of a marriage relationship because they are stuck proving themselves with sex. They are not living a satisfying life and end up disappointed, always in pursuit of the next experience.

Marriage is so much more than sex!

Ephesians 5:28-29: (NASB) ²⁸*So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;* ²⁹*for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church.*

A man should cherish his wife. The monogamy that God created for Adam and Eve - as verified by Jesus - is a powerful place for us to live and flourish in our Christian lives.



When I look at myself in the mirror, do I see one who is striving for the sanctity of higher scriptural standards or one who is sinking into a sensual cesspool of godless gratification? If I am sinking, I must seriously assess my condition and reach out for spiritual help, as my discipleship may well be at stake!

This is breathtakingly sobering. The worldly standards that surround us are the very poison that can and will make us spiritually sick!

**Sex is supposed to be reserved for marriage,
but what about things that are sexual but not actually sex?**

Once again, we are delving into the gray areas that our current day social norms have latched onto. As Christians, we need to be on our guard here. As we shall see, when it comes to asking questions about gray areas, the answers are usually black and white. Having technology in the palm of our hand is NOT permission to creatively sin!



I am not physically touching anyone, so what's the problem?



"sexting"

Sexting is sending sexual text messages, often involving explicit photos or videos of yourself. This is especially an issue for teens who are often under severe pressure to engage in this as a way of flirting, bullying, a dare or proof of commitment. The potential for damage with such a digital footprint is huge and can involve child pornography laws with felony prosecutions. It is a nightmare for our young people out there. It is a big problem because it is easy, and it is encouraged.

Matthew 5:27-28: (NASB) ²⁷You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery; ²⁸but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

While this is talking specifically to married men, we can expand the admonition to a broader base to consider this next principle.

Biblical Principle: Godliness and sanctified living are not made up of buffet table choices. If we truly follow Jesus, then our every decision is driven by the highest principles we can possibly reach.



The principles of these next texts show us the importance of full compliance with God's word and way:

1 Timothy 4:1-2: (KJV) ¹Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ²Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron.

While this is speaking about spiritual leadership, we want to take the principle here and apply it to our consideration. If we are involved in sexting, we might think we are not doing anything bad because we are not touching anyone.



Is my conscience seared? “Seared” means to have been made numb or less sensitive to a normal reaction.



Both of these are about our flesh - we are either feeding it or crucifying it. If we are following in the footsteps of Jesus, which is the right choice? To crucify the flesh.

The Apostle Paul next tells us that our very sanctification depends upon our sensual purity:

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5,7-8: (NASB) ³For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from **sexual immorality <4202>**; ⁴that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁷for God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. ⁸So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His holy spirit to you.

This is a powerful teaching from Paul. We are to possess our own bodies in sanctification and honor, not in lustful desires like everybody else. They do not know God, but we do. We must rise up to a different set of standards. *God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but to be set apart.*

Once again, this comes down to idolatry. If we put sexting and similar practices ahead of godly principles, then we have another “god.” This is a serious matter and some may need help with such an addiction. Be honest, be vulnerable, and find that spiritual mentor or leader who can help you back away from these things.



There are two parts to this issue:

First, is it a sin for the mother and/or the father if they:



- ...get married *before* the baby is born?
- ...get married *after* the baby is born?
- ...*never* get married?



Second, is the baby doomed because of the actions of the parents?



Unfortunately, this situation is common. If we find ourselves in this situation and look at it through the lens of our Christianity, we might think: *Oh, I'm pregnant, now what? Does God hate me? What happens to my child?* These kinds of considerations are very emotional.

Biblical Principle: As Christians, we are blessed to have forgiveness for our sins through Jesus. However, this forgiveness is not a “free pass” to sin and then be forgiven. Our forgiveness must be confirmed by our repentant thoughts, words and deeds!

In Part I, we ended with this unanswered question:



It is not okay to sin if we are saved by grace!

The Apostle Paul posed a similar question:

Romans 6:1-2: (NLT) ¹Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of His wonderful grace? ²Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?

We have died to sin - we are supposed to have put sin behind us. The more appropriate question is: *If I have sinned, how can I claim grace? I have tried and I have failed, now I need grace to help me stand and never go back there again. How do I do this?*

Let's go back and answer the question about the parents: is it a sin for the mother and/or the father if they:



...get married *before* the baby is born?

...get married *after* the baby is born?

...*never* get married?

The sin was having sex outside of marriage. The pregnancy is a natural consequence of that sin. The sin is not being pregnant or being born to unmarried parents.

For the Christian mother and/or father of the child conceived in sin there are three things to do, and not necessarily in this order:

**BLUNTLY BRING
YOUR SIN BEFORE GOD
ASK FOR FORGIVENESS** **Pray**

Hebrews 4:16: (NASB) *Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*



Bluntly - no sugar coating, no excuses - own up to the sin. This is a bad thing to do, no matter how it happened. If there was coercion is not material *at this moment* - what is material is acknowledging the sin and asking for forgiveness. We will not find *mercy and grace to help in time of need* unless we ask for it. God will not interrupt our lives, tapping us on the shoulder to tell us we need Him and here He is. He will wait until WE recognize the need.



This is what Peter told Simon the magician to do when Simon wanted the power to give people the holy spirit:

Acts 8:22: (NASB) *Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.*

The idea and purpose of repentance is to change our direction, and the repentance needs to be outward. This is what I did, and this is what I am doing to make recompense for those things. I am willing to accept whatever comes as a result, be accountable and move forward.



James 5:16: (NASB) *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

Obviously with any sin, the goal is to voluntarily repent and not just because we were caught. A pregnancy is eventually revealed. We need to take the initiative as early as we have the strength, seeking repentance, accepting accountability, knowing that God can forgive us if we are truly sincere and willing to change our direction.



Now onto the second point about the baby being somehow doomed.

Old Testament Israel had restrictions for those of illegitimate birth:

Deuteronomy 23:2: (NASB) *No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD.*

(Source: Bible Commentary by John Wesley) *Shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD* — shall not be admitted to honours and offices either in the church or commonwealth of Israel; and so the congregation of the Lord doth not here signify, the body of the people, but the society of the elders or rulers of the people.

- This referred to civil leadership in Israel.
- *Illegitimate birth* might also refer to those born of mixed marriages between the people of Israel and their Pagan neighbors, or a baby born from incest.



- In any case, this prohibited the baby from eventually holding a civil office in Israel. This was appropriate, as Israel was a physical nation, with physical laws, on a physical land. Their civil government was to be in strict adherence to God. This in no way meant the person was thrown out of Israel.

In addition, we know this text has no bearing whatsoever on whether a child born out of wedlock would qualify for entrance into heaven, since heaven was not even offered to the Jews at that time. It would be many years before Jesus would offer a new and living way by which we would be able to obtain a heavenly reward.

In a true Christian environment, the repentant parent(s) and the innocent child that came from their sin are truly welcome:

1 Corinthians 6:11: (NASB) *Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the spirit of our God.*

We sometimes fall. The beauty is that if we get up and sincerely ask for forgiveness, we can then change our direction and walk back into favor. We have to mean it; the repentance has to come from the heart. God sees our hearts, and we cannot fool Him.

While Deuteronomy referred to civil service, compare this to serving the brotherhood spiritually.

Christianity has no similar disqualifying statements to exclude a child born out of wedlock:

1 Timothy 3:2-4,6-7: (NASB) *²An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. ⁴He must be one who manages his own household well... ⁶and not a new convert... ⁷And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church...*

None of these numerous qualifications refer to how we are born. Our birth is not “held over us” as Christians. This happens from acknowledging sin, repenting of sin and being accountable in an appropriate way. This is what is required of us as Christians. We do make mistakes, but we need to take responsibility and then move forward.

Many people want to know if their baby will automatically qualify to go to hell because of the sin of the parents. Absolutely, unequivocally NO. The Bible does NOT teach a burning hell. We have addressed this in many podcasts.





If we proclaim to be Christians, then we are proclaiming to be different. We are proclaiming to live far above how we feel, and that can easily make us look pathetic, and frankly, out of touch to our worldly peers as they indulge where we will not. We proclaim to be accountable for our wrongdoing. Instead of hiding, we outwardly repent which opens the door to living forgiven.

So much of human sexuality is built around how we feel in any given moment. What a contrast to living for Jesus in every given moment!

With all of this firm guidance in hand, are there any gray areas when it comes to any and all situations of living together?

The abrupt answer would be no, but this answer demands explanation. Because the world is complicated, we need to find and apply the needed scriptural principles to whatever unique circumstance we may come across. The good news is, there is ALWAYS a scriptural principle that will give us guidance in every situation!



*What if we are planning on getting married?
What if we are not having sexual relations?*



We can have all kinds of reasons for doing something that ends up being marginal; and therefore, wrong.

Biblical Principle: As Christians, we are not only responsible for our own thoughts and behavior, we are also tasked with working at upbuilding the thoughts and behaviors of our fellow Christians as they observe our life experiences.

It is eye-opening to know that it is not just about me; it is about MY effect on YOU. We tend to forget this point with this type of “Is it a sin if I...?” question. We want to live our lives however we want and tend to forget that our actions spiritually affect the brotherhood around us.



Living together - even if in the best case you stay far away from each other - gives the appearance of immorality. Even if innocent and unintentional, we are obligated to respect the consciences of one another.

Once again, a scriptural principle:

Romans 14:13-15: (NASB) ¹³*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. ¹⁴I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. ¹⁵For if because of food your brother is hurt, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died.*

This is the context of food in that while nothing is unclean to eat, for whoever thinks it is, they should follow their conscience and not eat it.

1 Corinthians 8:9: (NASB) *But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.*

The Jewish dietary laws were strict, but now the believers in Christ were free from those restrictions. In the early church, there were questions about meat which had been offered to idols then later sold in the marketplace. To some it was just meat, separate from its previous use; to others this would make it unclean. This is talking about the principle of not causing someone to stumble by encouraging him to go against his conscience with something as unimportant as food.



To be blunt, at what point is it no one else's business? We cannot please everyone or be completely inoffensive, even within the brotherhood. Someone, somewhere, is going to disagree with what we are doing or how we are doing it, even if we are doing the right thing.

If we hold to the highest standard we are capable of, we are striving to fulfill the above scripture by not putting *a stumbling block* in someone else's way. We are not creating a situation that could be a trap for someone to fall into.

If two people share an address, someone may speculate on it. Is this just gossip and possibly malicious slander? Maybe, but we are not talking about people talking about it. We are talking about the impression we leave with others as they observe us. Our actions have planted a seed in others who see us. If they are less experienced in their Christian walk, they might see this as an acceptable example. That seed, even if it does not generate gossip, can sit and fester.

Paul concludes this teaching with a subtle but powerful statement:

Romans 14:21-22: (NASB) ²¹*It is good not to eat meat or to drink wine, or to do anything by which your brother stumbles. ²²The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.*

Let's paraphrase the last sentence: *Happy is the individual who does not condemn himself in what he himself approves as his own actions.*

We are happy if our actions reflect pure, unadulterated godly behavior that stands above reproach. That is the point of **Romans 14**. Do not do something that could cause your brother to stumble. For the sake of others, we need to consider our own desired actions and decide if it is a good idea to proceed. If our actions can be too easily misinterpreted, we would not want to go in that direction.



We do not want to encourage others to sin:

1 Corinthians 8:12: (NASB) *And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.*

If someone's conscience is weak, and we have planted that seed of a bad or misconstrued example in their head - we are at fault for doing that.



It comes down to setting boundaries. For example, we would teach a small child not to play in the street. But the boundary would not be the street. As a conscientious parent, we would set up a safe boundary perhaps 25 feet away from that curb.

Applying this to the Christian, we should not be so close to the "street." We do not want to be anywhere near even the appearance of sinning, so that our behavior cannot be misconstrued.

Another major consideration here is protecting the purity and reputation of my romantic partner:

Philippians 2:3-4: (NASB) *³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

Apply this to the person we want to live with. We need to face the fact that any cohabitation outside of marriage can easily put us in a compromised position regarding our attraction to one another, as well as put our "significant other" in a position of being looked upon badly. Do we want to do this?

This is an important perspective beyond just considering living with someone. If we are going to engage in a sin like premarital sex that clearly involves another person, we have to understand the responsibility of our actions in causing someone else's relationship with God to break down. Some people cannot come back from that kind of anguish. Do we want to participate in this? Am I actually going to encourage someone else to commit idolatry against God for my temporary pleasure, or even because I want to try to platonically live with that person and play house?

We can be a catalyst in other people's lives. Are we a catalyst towards idolatry or a catalyst towards spirituality? Choose. We make our choices through the subtlety of our lives.

Marriage is where sexual expression is pure before God:

Hebrews 13:4: (NASB) *Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for **fornicators <4205>** and adulterers God will judge.*

Marriage is honorable and *the marriage bed is to be undefiled*. Sex within marriage is good and without shame. This is where sex, in all of its wonder, expression and exploration, belongs.



It is pretty clear that we need to be morally firm in our stand regarding all aspects of sexuality:

Ephesians 5:3-5: (NASB) ³But **immorality** <4202> or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; ⁴and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this you know with certainty, that no **immoral** <4205> or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

Again, immorality and idolatry are linked in the same sentence. That is something to really think about. It is one of the most powerful points we can make. Immoral actions - and even immoral thoughts - lead us down the road to idolatry.

The very first commandment is *Thou shalt have no other god before Me*. God put that first for a reason. Sexuality is such a powerful draw in our lives. In its proper place, it can draw us closer to God through its proper expression. But in so many circumstances and the variations we have talked about, it can be a tool of Satan to draw us toward him and away from God, worshipping the created rather than the Creator.

Humility before God and each other is always an appropriate basis for any and all relationships we have.

Humility and faith in God's care prepare us to stand against Satan:

1 Peter 5:6-9: (NASB) ⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, ⁷casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.



Rick, you and Jonathan are each happily and faithfully married. I am happily and faithfully married. Some might say, "Well, sure. This is easy for you - you don't have to deal with these sexual temptations!"

Nothing is ever "easy" in relationships. To be happily and faithfully married is the result of a lot of work, a lot of humility, making mistakes, repenting, turning our direction and so on.

More importantly, if we are in a position of having made a bad choice, today is the ideal time to stop, consider and turn around. It takes humility to do that. If we are footstep followers of Jesus, this is what we are required to do. We need to start somewhere. Wherever we are at this point, we can stop and turn the page, turn the corner and walk in a different direction.



Being single and living a powerful and passionate Christian life!



When it comes to all aspects of human sexuality, our responsibility as Christians is clear. We are to live above the fray. We are to uphold standards that will be laughed at, insulted, and be categorized as bigoted, unfair and outdated. Our lot is to stand to the best of our ability, as Jesus stood against the tide of sin and corruption. In so doing, we honor God with our sexuality.

Sexuality is not inherently sinful. We can choose to use our sexuality to honor God. Make the choice as to which direction you, yourself, will go. This is hard, especially in today's world. You can decide to live above and beyond the standards that surround us in this world. You can put your faith in those that see and hold to godly principles, rather than those who just see the moment. They are not only wrong but will end up broken.

*So, is it a sin if I...?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on August 15, 2022
Ep. 1242: Is the Lord Really My Shepherd?

Bonus Material and Study Questions

Commentaries regarding the easily-misunderstood meaning of this text:

Deuteronomy 23:2: (NASB) *No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD.*

(Source: Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary) "To enter into the congregation of the LORD" means either admission to public honors and offices in the Church and State of Israel, or, in the case of foreigners, incorporation with that nation by marriage.



(Source: Bible Commentary by John Wesley) Shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD — Shall not be admitted to honours and offices either in the church or commonwealth of Israel; and so the congregation of the Lord doth not here signify, the body of the people, but the society of the elders or rulers of the people. Add to this, that the Hebrew word, Kahal, generally signifies a congregation or company of men met together; and therefore this cannot so conveniently be meant of all the body of the people, which could never meet in one place, but of the chief rulers, which frequently did so.

(Source: Matthew Poole's Bible Commentary) Shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; which phrase cannot be understood so that they might not come into the church, or holy assemblies, to worship God, to pray, or hear, etc., because proselytes of any nation, being admitted to common church privileges, no less than the Jews, (as is evident from Exodus 12:48, Leviticus 22:18, Numbers 9:14, 15:15) it were absurd to think that any of the Israelites, for such a natural or involuntary defect, should be shut out from all God's ordinances.

(Source: Excerpt from *God's Plan for Marriage: Dealing with Old Testament Polygamy*, by Gregory Alan Thornbury)

What are the references to polygamy in the Bible? In biblical times, it was common to find the custom of having more than one wife or husband at the same time. The truth is that the story of polygamy in the Old Testament is, well, a problem. Although monogamy was clearly God's intent - Genesis 2:22-24, the picture blurs pretty quickly after Adam and Eve's Genesis 3 and expulsion from the Garden. By Genesis 4, you have Cain's son Lamech taking two wives.

Moses had two wives as well. The Mosaic Law likewise accommodated the practice of marrying more than one wife, including captured prisoners from foreign conquests (Deuteronomy 21:1-17). It also made provisions for continuing the family line by marrying a brother's wife if he died without producing heirs (Deuteronomy 25:5-12). And the stories keep coming: Gideon, one of Israel's champions, had many wives; Elkanah, a presumably godly man and the father of Samuel, had two wives.

The picture gets even dicier when one considers the practice of the kings of Israel. King David, the "man after God's own heart," had eight wives. In 2 Samuel 12 when the prophet Nathan confronts David over his sin with Bathsheba, we read: "This is what the Lord God of Israel says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I have given you your master's house and your master's wives into your bosom ... and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah, and as if this wasn't enough, I would have given you even more.'" David's son, Solomon, however, went overboard, flouting a stipulation in Deuteronomy 17:16-17 that kings not accumulate "too many" wives. For the record, Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines.

How does one respond to this situation? The answer begins by seeing that God always points His creation back to the primacy and perfection of the original design. Next, you have to read every book to the end -- especially if it is the biblical context. And if you read the stories about the characters referenced above, you'll quickly find that polygamy was an unmitigated sociological disaster that created heartbreak and sowed familial discord. By the time of the writing of Malachi, God's command to a thoroughly chastised nation was clear: covenantal monogamy was to be the norm.

Further, through the ministry of Jesus, we see God "reset the clock" so to speak to the original goodness of monogamous marital union -- pointing forward to a new society and a new way. He also enacted new provisions to protect women and raise their standing in society. Jesus showed a world that had distorted the meaning of marriage back to the beauty of "the man being joined to his wife, and two will become one flesh."

Study QUESTIONS

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Ep. 1241: Is it a Sin If I...? (Part II)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1241-sex/>

See:  **CQRewind**
SHOW NOTES

1. What are four reasons a Christian might give for wanting to have sex before marriage? What is the biblical principle that negates these reasons for sex before marriage? (See Matthew 19:4-9)
2. What do the five Greek words translated into English as “immorality” or “fornication” in the New Testament have in common? Why is it important that this sin is different from all others? How do these actions violate the first commandment? Why was this particularly appropriate advice for the Corinthian church? (See Jude 1:7, 1 Corinthians 6:9-19, 7:1-2, Exodus 20:3)
3. What is polygamy? Do we know why God allowed this in the Old Testament? What does it mean in the next biblical principle to be “looking for loopholes”? How did Solomon illustrate the wisdom of the edict to “not multiply wives”? (See Genesis 4:19, Matthew 19:8, Deuteronomy 17:17)
4. What are three arguments that could be made to show men are not meant to be monogamous? What are the counter arguments? Are there benefits to monogamy? From where do our standards of behavior come? (See Matthew 19:5-6, 1 Timothy 3:1-2)
5. What should define a married relationship? Why do some think sex between unmarried people is more exciting than sex within marriage? How does commitment affect *all* aspects of a relationship, including sex? Those pursuing multiple sexual partners are doomed to what? (See Ephesians 5:28-29)
6. Why is it a sin to engage in sexting even though there is no physical touching at the time? Why does this practice and similar ones drag us back into idolatry? What is the solution? (See Matthew 5:27-28, 1 Timothy 4:1-2, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8)
7. Is it okay to sin since we are saved by grace? If we do sin, what are three steps to claim God’s grace? Where does the sin lie in having a baby out of wedlock? How should this affect the brotherhood’s acceptance of the baby? (See Romans 6:1-2, Hebrews 4:16, Acts 8:22, James 5:16, 1 Corinthians 6:11)
8. If you and your romantic partner do not indulge in a sexual relationship, what is the danger in living with them before marriage? Why should we sincerely consider how our actions *appear* to our brethren? Describe how we can be a catalyst in other people’s lives towards spirituality. (See Romans 14:13-15, 21-22, 1 Corinthians 8:9,12, Philippians 2:3-4)
9. Is sexuality and enjoying sex within marriage sinful? Explain. (See Hebrews 13:4)
10. What choices have you made in relationships throughout your life that are you proud of? What do you wish you would have done differently? What character trait is necessary to improve our relationships with God and with loved ones? What actions should we take to correct bad choices? (See 1 Peter 5:6-9)