

What the Bible Says about Premarital Sex

Case Study: Greg & Emily have been dating since their freshman year in college, two years ago. They both became Christians last semester and plan to be married after they finish graduate school in 3 years. Since becoming Christians they've learned a lot about walking with Christ but it doesn't feel like their faith changes their dating relationship very much. Most of their close couple friends are non-Christians and have already had sex. Greg feels it's a natural next step in their relationship, especially since he plans to marry Emily. Emily feels unsure coming from a traditional background where she knows her parents might be angry but it also feels like an inevitable progression of affection since they are already very close emotionally. She's heard it's wrong from her friend who led her to Christ, but she also is afraid that refusing Greg for too long will cause a break in their relationship. Emily wants to be a good Christian, but waiting to have sex for 3 years feels impossible and figures if she's going to disobey she might as well do it now so that she doesn't endanger their future. If you were the Christian friend who led Emily to Christ what would you say to her?

What does fornication mean?

What does your culture tell you about sex before marriage?

What do you think the traditional value of waiting for marriage to have a sexual relationship is outdated? Why or why not?

What does the Bible say about this topic?

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Ephesians 5:3-10

Galatians 5:19-25

What did you learn from these passages?

What did you not understand? What aspects of the issue do you feel the Bible does not address? What questions do you still have?

What do you need to do or change as a result of what you learned?

Leader's Guide

Definition:

- Fornication- Greek Strong's number 4203; Transliteration= "porneuo"

- ❑ To give one's self to unlawful sexual intercourse

Facts about Premarital Sex:

- ❑ Females who have slept with three or more people over a lifetime are 15 times more likely to get cervical cancer.
- ❑ Couples who have sex before marriage are more likely to get divorced. Women who have premarital sex increase their odds of divorce by about 60 percent.
- ❑ The more promiscuous you are before marriage, the more likely you are to commit adultery AFTER marriage.
- ❑ People who have sex before marriage run a risk of marrying someone who is not right for them. Sexual intimacy can be emotionally blinding and it makes couples feel closer than they really are. One counselor put it perfectly by saying, "Real love can stand the test of time without physical intimacy." The sexually active lose objectivity.
- ❑ Those who stay pure and marry enjoy sex most: The Family Research Council surveyed 1,100 people about their sexual satisfaction. It was "found that 72 percent of all married 'traditionalists' (those who believe that sex outside of marriage is wrong) report high sexual satisfaction. This is roughly 31 percentage points higher than the level registered by unmarried 'non-traditionalists' (people who have no or only some objection to sex outside of marriage) and 13 percentage points higher than that registered by married non-traditionalists."

Rationalizations for Pre-marital sex:

1. Biological: Sex is a basic biological drive.

- a. **RESPONSE:** Humans cannot live without food, air, or water. But we can live without sex. Nature says several things on this point. First, God has built into the natural world a mechanism for sexual release: nocturnal emissions, or orgasmic release during dreams. Second, nature rejects human promiscuity, as the growing problem of sexually-transmitted diseases makes abundantly clear. Couples who confine sex to their marriage partners face no such danger from disease. Further, we can safely conclude that abstinence does not impair one's health. Sociologist Robert Bell quips, "There appear to be no records of males hospitalized because girls refused to provide sexual outlets." Human sexuality is unique in that it *includes*, but *transcends*, physical reproductive elements. It reaches an intimacy unknown among animals.

2. Statistical: Everyone is having sex.

- a. **RESPONSE:** Statistics do not establish moral values. Is something right because it happens frequently or because many people believe it? A primitive tribe may have a 100 percent majority consensus that cannibalism is right! Does that make it right? A majority can be wrong.
- b. If a **society** sets the standards, those standards are subject to change with the whim and will of the majority. In one generation slavery may be right and abortion wrong, as in early nineteenth-century America; but in another generation, abortion is in and slavery is out, as today.

3. Proof of Love: Sexual activity tests or provides proof of love.

- a. **RESPONSE:** Any person who insists on making sex the ultimate proof of a genuine relationship isn't saying "I love you," but rather "I love it." True love concerns itself with the well-being of the other person and would not interpret sexual hesitation in such a selfish way. Furthermore, the person adopting this practice develops a pattern of demonstrating love by purely sexual responsiveness. Ultimately he or she enters marriage with something of a distortion as to what real intimacy means, to say nothing of having to deal with the memories of previous loves. The broader perspective sees sex as an integral and important part of a meaningful relationship but not the totality of it.

4. Psychological: Self-restraint is harmful.

- a. **RESPONSE:** Sublimating one's sex drive is not unhealthy. In sublimation the processes of sexual and aggressive energy are displaced by nonsexual and nondestructive goals. But guilt, unlike sublimation, can produce devastating results in human behavior. It is anger turned inward, producing depression, a lowered self-esteem, and fatigue. Further, chastity and virginity contribute very little to sexual problems. Unsatisfying relationships, guilt, hostility toward the opposite sex, and low self-esteem do. In short, there are no scars where there have been no wounds.
- b. The sex act itself is no guarantee of fun. Initial sex experiences outside of marriage are often disappointing because of high anxiety and guilt levels. Fear of discovery, haste, and lack of commitment and communication all combine to spoil some of the fun. Further, there is no way to avoid the exploitation of someone in the relationship if it's just for fun. Sometimes one person's pleasure is another's pain. Often one of the partners is being or feels used.

5. Experimental: It's better to have experience before you are married in order to experience greater satisfaction with your spouse.

- a. **RESPONSE:** the body was designed to perform sexually and will do so given the opportunity. Healthy sexual adjustment depends much more on communication than technique. World-famous sex therapists Masters and Johnson found: "Nothing good is going to happen in bed between a husband and wife unless good things have been happening between them before they go into bed. There is no way for a good sexual technique to remedy a poor emotional relationship. In other words, a deeply-committed couple with **no** sexual experience is far ahead of a sexually-experienced couple with shallow and tentative commitment, as far as the marriage's future sexual success is concerned.

6. Compatibility: We won't know if we are compatible until we have sex?

- a. **RESPONSE:** A foot stays about the same size, but the human sex organs are wonderfully stretchable and adaptable. A woman's vagina can enlarge to accommodate the birth of a baby or to fit a male organ of any size. Physical compatibility is 99 percent guaranteed, and the other 1 percent can become so with medical consultation and assistance. Of greater importance is to test person-to-person compatibility. Sexual dysfunction in young people is usually psychologically based. Building bridges of love and mutual care in the non-physical facets of the relationship are the sure roads to a honeymoon that can last a lifetime.

7. Marital: We are engaged or know we will be married in the future.

- a. **RESPONSE:** Loss of respect and intensity of feelings may occur, as well as guilt and dissatisfaction. Restraint for a time adds excitement to the relationship and makes the honeymoon something very special, not a continuation of already-established patterns. Some couples also see little value in a public declaration of marital intent or they may think the formality of a wedding is a traditional burden. Those who prefer no public declaration but rather seek anonymity may be saying something about the depth (or lack thereof) of their commitment to one another.

******Couples who rationalize their right to pre-marital sex are often experiencing infatuation, not love as the Bible defines it in 1 Corinthians 13.***

Characteristics of Infatuation

Sudden

Characteristics of Love

Gradual

Highly emotional
Idealistic
Based on a feeling
Weakened by separation
Seeking to find happiness
Focusing on external looks
Seeking to get
Possessive
In love with "emotion"
Consuming
Isolating from other relationships

Faithfully consistent
Realistic
Based on a commitment
Strengthened by separation
Seeking to give happiness
Focusing on internal character
Seeking to give
Freeing
In love with "devotion"
Self-Controlled
Welcoming of outside fellowship

Reasons to Build Sexual Boundaries:

1. I want the blessings and anointing of God on my life.
2. I don't want to destroy God's gift of wisdom, love and grace. (Psalm 66:18)
3. If I say I "love" someone, I must have a commitment to seek that person's highest good and best. (1 Corinthians 13:4)
4. I must not take the place of God trying to be the need-meeter for another. (Exodus 20:3)
5. I don't want to let anyone else take the place of God in my life. No one else can be my Savior. Comfort, joy, satisfaction, value, and significance come from Him alone.
6. I want to live a life of integrity being the same in the dark as I am in the light. (Job 27:5)
7. I want to display before my future children and the on-looking world what it means to have a Christ in me being the source of power for my life. (Colossians 1:27)

Consequences of Sex Before Marriage:

1. Regrets

- a. Girls, especially, need to know in advance the sharp regret that so many young women feel after becoming sexually involved. Girls are more vulnerable than boys because girls are more likely to think of sex as a way to "show you care." They're more likely to see sex as a sign of commitment in the relationship. She wishes she *could* lose the guy she's involved with, but she feels trapped by their sexual relationship.

2. Guilt

- a. The guilt may come from knowing that your parents would be upset if they knew you were having sex. Or it may stem from your religious convictions. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, for example, all teach that sex is a gift from God reserved for marriage and that sexual relations outside marriage are morally wrong. Sometimes guilt about their sexual past ends up crippling people when they become parents by keeping them from advising their own children not to become sexually involved. According to counselor Dr. Carson Daly: "Because these parents can't bear to be considered hypocrites, or to consider themselves hypocrites, they don't give their children the sexual guidance they very much need."

3. Loss of Self-Respect and Self-Esteem:

- a. Sometimes casual sex lowers self-esteem, leading a person into further casual sex, which leads to further loss of self-esteem in an oppressive cycle from which it may be hard to break free.
- b. "There are girls in our dorm who have had multiple pregnancies and multiple abortions. They tend to be filled with self-loathing. But because they have so little self-esteem, they will settle for any kind of attention from guys.

So they keep going back to the same kind of destructive situations and relationships that got them into trouble in the first place."

4. The Corruption of Character

- a. When people treat others as sexual objects and exploit them for their own pleasure, they not only lose self-respect; they corrupt their characters and debase their sexuality in the process. Good character consists of virtues such as respect, responsibility, honesty, fairness, caring and self-control. With regard to sex, the character trait of self-control is particularly crucial.
- b. The breakdown of sexual self-control is a big factor in many of the sex-related problems that plague our society: rape, promiscuity, pornography, addiction to sex, sexual harassment, the sexual abuse of children, sexual infidelity in marriage, and the serious damage to families many of these problems cause.

5. Shaken Trust & Fear of Commitment:

- a. Young people who feel used or betrayed after the break-up of a sexual relationship may experience difficulty in future relationships. Some sexually exploited people, as we've seen, develop such low self-esteem that they seek any kind of attention, even if it's another short-lived and demeaning sexual relationship. But other people, once burned, withdraw. They have trouble trusting; they don't want to get burned again.

6. Feelings of Betrayal:

- a. People often feel angry when somebody breaks up with them, even if sex has not been involved. But the sense of betrayal is usually much greater if sex has been part of the relationship. Sex can be emotional dynamite. It can lead a person to think that the relationship is really serious, that both people really love each other. It can create a very strong emotional bond that hurts terribly when it's ruptured - especially if it seems that the other person never had the same commitment.

7. Depression and Suicide:

- a. In *Sex and the Teenager*, Kieran Sawyer writes: "The more the relationship seems like real love, the more the young person is likely to invest, and the deeper the pain and hurt if the relationship breaks up." Sometimes the emotional turmoil caused by the rupture of a sexual relationship leads to deep depression. The depression, in turn, may lead some people to take their own lives.

8. Ruined Relationships:

- a. Sex can have another kind of emotional consequence: It can turn a good relationship bad. Other dimensions of the relationship stop developing. Pretty soon, negative emotions enter the picture. Eventually, they poison the relationship, and what had been a caring relationship comes to a bitter end.

9. Stunting Personal Development:

- a. Premature sexual involvement not only can stunt the development of a relationship; it also can stunt one's development as a person. Just as some young people handle anxieties by turning to drugs and alcohol, others handle them by turning to sex. Sex becomes an escape. They aren't learning how to cope with life's pressures.
- b. Young adults who are absorbed in an intense sexual relationship are turning inward on one thing at the very time in their lives when they should be reaching out - forming new friendships, joining clubs and teams, developing their interests and skills, taking on bigger social responsibilities. All of these are important nutrients for development as a person. And this period of life is special because young people have both the time and opportunities to develop their talents and interests. The growing they do during these years

will affect them all their lives. If young people don't put these years to good use, they may never develop their full potential.

Scenarios You Might Encounter:

- A disciple involved in a sexual relationship
- A disciple feels unable to committ to wait for sex until marriage

- ❑ A disciple is considering or facing pressure to have sex with his/her non-Christian boyfriend/girlfriend
- ❑ A disciple knows someone in the community dealing with this issue
- ❑ A disciple has had sex in a past relationship (preconversion)
- ❑ A disciple has had sex in a past relationship (postconversion)
- ❑ A dating couple in your student fellowship is struggling with this commandment; maybe they had a sexual relationship before they became Christians or as young believers and are still dating and struggling to obey; they plan to be married someday

Additional Resources:

- ❑ 7UP #7 “Your New Life in Relationships” (especially chart under point #2 “God’s commands: Both to Protect you and Provide for you”)
- ❑ Worth Waiting For by Josh McDowell (available in Chinese)

Going Deeper:

- ❑ Is having sex common among your roommates and classmates who are in serious dating relationships?
- ❑ How open are students on your campus about their physical relationship with their girlfriends/boyfriends?
- ❑ What are the most common objections you hear among your peers for why sex before marriage is not wrong or bad? Are they persuasive to you?
- ❑ Have you ever had a friend who was in a sexual relationship and later regretted it? Why did he/she regret it? What did you think of his/ her situation?
- ❑ Do you think having sex in a dating relationship is destructive or beneficial for the couple? How?
- ❑ Does God’s standard of waiting for marriage seem impossible to you? Why or why not?
- ❑ What factors would affect whether or not you had sex in a dating relationship? What might encourage you to wait or not wait?
- ❑ As we studied about what the Bible said about sex before marriage, did you feel uncomfortable remembering anything from a past dating relationship?
- ❑ Have you had any past relationships in which you wish you had made different decisions? What type of decisions would you change knowing what you know now as a maturer Christian?
- ❑ Do you think the Bible’s truth about the consequences and affects of sex before marriage applies to the lives of nonChristians as well as Christians? Why or why not?
- ❑ Have you ever felt pressure from friends or a boyfriend/ girlfriend to have sex? How did you handle that pressure?
- ❑ Do you think if someone has sex before marriage they can ever go back to pure lifestyle? Why or why not?