

How to battle sexual temptation



*"Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: 'It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.'² But because of the temptation to sexual immorality [**porneia**], each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.*

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The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

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For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

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Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

Corinth was a sexually idolatrous and immoral culture, much like the USA. Paul notes the strong temptation for sexual immorality, a temptation that is easily understood because we were created as sexual beings. We are prone to distort and misuse what God has created for His glory.

Paul gives a clear solution for temptation to sexual immorality – *marriage*. He writes, "each man should have *his own*
wife and

each woman
her own husband

." Paul is certainly suggesting that sex outside of marriage is "sexual immorality," and we know this in part by Paul's use of the word "temptation." God's resolution for intense sexual struggle and temptation is

Biblical marriage

, not sex outside of marriage.

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Then Paul explains sex more vividly in the next few lines by addressing the issue of marital and biological authority. Paul is clear that the wife has authority over her husband's body, and vice versa. Notice Paul does not use the word "lover" or "girlfriend" or "boyfriend." Within the covenant of marriage is a strong physical bond between husband and wife, a oneness, a glorious unity with rights and privileges.

Then in verse 5, Paul honestly addresses a sexual temptation that exist even for those who are married. He uses the phrase, "lack of self-control," meaning **porneia** of a different kind, namely *adultery*, or the temptation for sexual expression with people outside of the marriage covenant.

Also, Paul makes a significant point in v. 9: "But if they [**widows**] cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion." So, for women who are unmarried and struggling with self-control and desires for sexual expression, once again God gives *marriage* as the solution. Paul defines "self-control" for the unmarried widow as abstinence from sex outside of marriage. So, marriage is much better, more God-honoring, more holy than remaining single and being purousqai (**purousthai**) or "aflame with passion". The word **purousqai** literally means "make fiery hot", but when used in the context of 1 Cor. 7 it means, "to burn with desire" or "to be sexually aroused." If premarital sex is permissible by God, why does Paul tell the unmarried widows to *marry* as a solution for their sexual desire and passion?

Sexual misconduct and propriety

1 Corinthians 7:36, *"If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—**it is no sin.**"*

Read 1 Cor. 7:36-38. There is controversy surrounding the interpretation of these three verses, but the ESV translates them effectively. It appears that the verses are talking about an engaged couple. With that assumption, premarital sex is dealt a severe blow. "Behaving properly" in this

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context does not include premarital sex, but rather commends marriage once again as the appropriate response to sexual passion and temptation. Paul does say, "his passions are strong" meaning the engaged man greatly desires sex; a natural desire. Because sex is a tremendous blessing for us, and because God intends it to be enjoyed, He creates an environment in which sex can most meaningfully thrive for His glory – *marriage*.

These few texts are only the beginning of understanding sexuality as God designed it. There are other Scripture texts that advance the argument, but these few passages are very helpful in developing a clear, Biblical position on the question of premarital sex. The Bible is very apparent on the topic of sex when you uncover the great wisdom God has contained in it. Sadly, many people try to defend premarital sex from a position of Biblical ignorance, or perhaps shallowness, in order to justify their own and other's actions (Rom. 1:18, 32).

Existential argument

There is also compelling evidence against premarital sex from outside the Bible, one that unites Biblical testimony with our personal experience in culture. Premarital sex has caused many people a certain degree of personal pleasure, but with residual personal pain, heartache, bitterness, anger, and resentment. Premarital sex has increased sexually transmitted diseases and abortion at epidemic levels, and has left its brutal mark on many people (physically, emotionally, spiritually, etc.). The psychological effect of premarital sex is palpable in our sexualized culture. Co-habitation has added fuel to the fire of sexual promiscuity and immorality, and statistically speaking, pre-marital sex and cohabitation do not promote health and longevity in relationships (study remarriage stats).

Conclusion

Sex is a lovely and exquisite gift given to us by a gracious and loving God. Sex is one way we can glorify God and enjoy Him, yet it must be enjoyed within the beautiful and joy-inducing boundaries He has set. Like many things in life, the enjoyment of sex outside of the proper, appropriate, and God-ordered boundaries will cause a reduction in joy, a delight deficiency, and will cause great pain, if not in the short term, most certainly in the long-term. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him and the boundaries He has set for His glorious gift of sex.

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