

Sexuality, singleness and marriage – what our loving Father says.

*Where does real joy come from?
What does the Bible teach about sexuality?
How can we answer those who oppose us?*

For many people who take their lead from the society around them it will come as a great surprise to know that extreme joy and happiness come from serving God. All experiences we may have – adventure, food,

entertainment, intellectual pursuits, physical thrills, etc., are only joyful when they happen in the context of enjoying God first. Taken without this foundation they eventually produce the cancer of self-centredness which leads along the pathway to unhappiness and inner loneliness in old age.



In first place Jesus teaches that ultimate joy in life comes from obeying His commandments. He said

in John 15:9-12 “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. *I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!* This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.” There is no greater joy than this. We can say then that whether we are married or single, our greatest joy will come from obeying the Father’s commandments and not from any sensual experience.

It may seem obvious to say so, but God created sexual relationships for a married man and woman that out of great intimacy they would have children. Because those who don’t know the Lord chase physical pleasure, they build up their expectation of having exciting experiences – eating, drinking, sport, daring pursuits and sex. However, compared to the joy of knowing and obeying God, these are momentary and pale into insignificance. They can also be addictive, so that they dominate rather than giving any pleasure at all.

Why follow the Bible’s guidelines?

God created us and knows best. “Male and female he created them, and he blessed them” (Gen 5:2) Jesus Christ tells us that God is our creator and wants to bless us. He has given us “richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim 6:17). As creator He knows what is good for us and what is bad. Just as

sunshine can be pleasant or dangerous and fire is good for warmth but burns if touched, so sexual relationships can either be wholesome or harmful.

Simplicity

In a simple, happy and wholesome society, the joy of life is found in “fearing God and keeping His commandments” (Eccl 12:13). King Solomon, who wrote this, had experienced the extreme emptiness of living for pleasure.

Singleness.

Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 believes that it is better to remain single to serve the Lord. This is because “An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord’s affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord’s affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.” 1 Cor 7:32-35.



Commenting on singleness and also divorce Jesus said: “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.” Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.” Matthew 19:8-12. Paul’s words were strong,

and Jesus' even stronger: it is better to remain single. However, as Paul says, we are free to marry if the situation presents itself and we wish to do so. (1 Cor 7:36-38.)

Deviant behaviour

Throughout the history of the world there have been periods when societies have deviated greatly from the creator's intentions, such as in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19) where homosexuality dominated, and also similarly with the Levite in Gibeah and his concubine (see Judges 19). Self-indulgence and moral decay is often cited as one of the reasons for the fall of empires such as that of the Greeks and Romans.

Homosexuality. By the above definitions we know that sex between anyone but a married man and a woman is harmful. But in the UK we live in a society that wants to believe it's not. How do we answer this? We can turn to the Bible for help: When the Pharisees wanted to catch Jesus out, they asked him difficult questions, such as "should we pay taxes to Cesar or not?" "But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him." (Matt 22, Mark 12)

From this we learn that when people are trying to catch us out we need to pray for wisdom. For example, when asked "Do you believe homosexuality is right" we could answer with a question: "How many people were killed on the roads in the UK last year?" The answer is about 2000. "And how many people contracted aids in the UK last year?" The answer is about 2000. "Do you believe we should work towards zero deaths from both road accidents and aids infection?" If the answer is "yes" then we can continue the argument by pointing out that nearly 90% of aids infection is caused by homosexual or bisexual behaviour. And nearly half of those innocently infected are women.

We don't allow people to drive recklessly and so we have laws against it; in the same way we should discourage people from having reckless sexual relationships. Note that it is always women who suffer the most from promiscuity, either by unwittingly contracting disease or by being left with a child. God will judge very severely those who promote promiscuous living by their own unchained behaviour. It causes immense suffering to so many people. Don't think for one moment that you can legitimately indulge in ungodly behaviour just because others around you do.

Abortion.

Another consequence of promiscuity is the murder of unborn children. When does a foetus become a human being? It is said that someone is dead when they are brain dead. With this definition we could also say that a foetus is alive when brain waves are detected; this is at about 7 weeks. Abortion in Europe is allowed until 22 weeks. In Europe alone there is about one abortion per 11 seconds or nearly 3 million a year, accounting for 18% of all pregnancies. This wilful murder can also have terrible psychological consequences for the mother. (Note that we are not talking about exceptional cases when a pregnancy is endangering the life of the mother to be. In such cases we need to pray and act wisely.) We desperately need to pray for a revival in our society.



Overcoming temptation and working towards ultimate joy:

What do you do with tempting thoughts? Turn away and ignore them! Occupy the mind with “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable” (Phil 4:8) The greatest joy is to be had by denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Jesus. He said: “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.” John 17:13 “These things” refer in this chapter to the holiness and unity of believers. As we pursue these two goals so we will be filled with ever increasing joy.

Conclusion

God has blessed us with “every spiritual blessing in Christ”. Physical experiences only give genuine joy in accordance with God’s guidelines and when our life is built on the solid rock of hearing the teaching of Jesus and putting it into practice. Those who don’t know the Lord seek pleasure in experiences. Let’s confidently love and serve the Lord, knowing that in doing so the greatest joy is ours. Amen.