“I Can’t Forgive Myself for Not Being a Virgin”

I am writing you in order to possibly get some advice on something that has been laboring me for a long time now. I am an extremely strong Christian who is attending a Christian university in order to become a Youth Pastor as a career/mission. Unfortunately though I have made some very bad choices in my life, and I continually have trouble giving them entirely to God. The biggest battle that I face day in day out is the fact that I am no longer a virgin, and I’m not married. Three months ago I broke up with my girlfriend of two years, because I could no longer live with myself continuing having sex outside of marriage. Since then I have fully given myself to Christ once more, except for the fact that I can not live in peace with the fact that I would not be able to give my virginity to my wife if I get married. I was just wondering if you had any advice for me in how I could possibly live with myself a little better than I am now. I realize that I made an irreversible mistake, and that I must suffer the consequences of my actions, so if you don’t have any advice for me than I completely understand. Thanks for being there for people to ask their tough questions to. I know I appreciate it greatly.

Consider the dynamics of the Lord Jesus’ exchange with the woman caught in adultery. He looked right past her sin to the precious soul underneath, with total love and acceptance. The same way He looks at you! When He told her, “Go and sin no more,” He was acknowledging that she had sinned but the grace of His acceptance was a shame-buster. Don’t you know that the shame just fell off her in chunks? Those words communicate the ability to move forward, beyond our sin, into the life of holiness and righteousness God calls us to.

It’s true you can’t give your virginity to your future wife. But you can give your purity to her. Consider the response of

a godly young woman accepting this truth about you and forgiving you for it anyway—as the Lord Jesus said, “He who is forgiven much, loves much.” It prepares you to love this kind of special woman that more more!

I think the enemy of your soul has succeeded in keeping your focus on yourself and your sin—now confessed and repented of, so it’s GONE—instead of on Jesus. He has no condemnation for you, and He invites you to give Him your shame since He knows how to deal with it . . . He despises it! (Heb. 12:2) He makes it wither up and disappear!

Don’t let Satan have another minute of your life. Every time you are tempted to wallow in your remorse and guilt, turn it around and thank the Lord for forgiving and cleansing you. (Have you let Him cleanse you? [1 John 1:9] If not, thank Him for cleansing AS WELL AS forgiving you.) But He’s probably preparing a young lady right now for you who will deal graciously with your past. That young lady might just be someone who has committed the same sin as you, who will not only forgive but fully understand. Then you can both rejoice together in being understood and giving each other lots of grace.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What About Virgins Marrying

Non-Virgins?”

I am engaged to a born again Christian who is not a virgin. Does the Bible say anything about this? We are equally yoked. Why is it strongly advised not to marry someone who is not a virgin even if their past is just that . . . their past. I have read a few articles on the subject, but few give reasons why. Thank you for taking time to answer my question. Your website has been a wonderful source of help to me and I have passed along several email answers and articles to friends and family who are facing such issues.

I’m so glad you wrote, because it is a privilege to encourage you about this. I think it is a form of legalism or judgmentalism to make non-virgins into an inferior class of people. Does the blood of Jesus not cleanse us from all unrighteousness? You know, there are a lot of technical virgins who are very sexually experienced with everything but intercourse; that is certainly not purity, and it still brings memories of past sexual partners into any marriage. Then there are people who haven’t had sex but are still addicted to pornography and masturbation. Guess what: that is a tremendous burden to bring into a marriage!

The ground is level at the foot of the cross. So a person who has repented of their sexual experience and is living a holy and pure life can well be at the same place spiritually as a virgin.

Enjoy this story I came across a few years ago:

+ + + + + + + + + +

> ***Slandering The Blood of Jesus***
> *One night in a church service a young woman felt the tug of God at her heart. She responded to God’s call and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The young woman had a very rough past, involving alcohol, drugs, and prostitution. But,*

the change in her was evident. As time went on she became a faithful member of the church. She eventually became involved in the ministry, teaching young children. It was not very long until this faithful young woman had caught the eye and heart of the pastor's son. Their relationship grew and they began to make wedding plans. This is when the problems began. You see, about one half of the church did not think that a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The church members began to argue and fight about the matter. So they decided to have a meeting. As the people made their arguments and tensions increased, the meeting was getting completely out of hand. The young woman became very upset about all the things being brought up about her past. As she began to cry the pastor's son stood to speak. He could not bear the pain it was causing his wife-to-be. He began to speak and his statement was this: "My fiancé's past is not what is on trial here. What you are questioning is the ability of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. So, does it wash away sin or not?" The whole church began to weep as they realized that they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Too often, even as Christians, we bring up the past and use it as a weapon against our brothers and sisters. Forgiveness is a very foundational part of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the blood of Jesus does not cleanse the other person completely then it cannot cleanse us completely. If that is the case, then we are all in a lot of trouble. What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus . . . end of case!!! God forgives . . . so should we.

+ + + + + + + + + +

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“What’s God’s Plan for Sex in Marriage?”

I’m wondering if the bible addresses the issue of sexuality after marriage. Is sex only for pleasure acceptable once a couple is married? If so are their certain ways married couples can have sex? I.e., different positions that are appropriate and others that are not?

I look forward to the day when I have a wife and can enjoy these gifts, but I want to make sure that I’m doing it in a God honoring way.

It sure does! A whole book about sexuality after marriage! The Song of Solomon is extremely erotic, but it’s written in symbolism so a lot of people miss it if they’re looking for only the literal. For instance, the use of “fruit” usually refers to the husband’s genitals, and “garden” to the wife’s. God’s word on sex after marriage is “Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers.” (SoS 5:1)

Jody and Linda Dillow have written two excellent books on God’s view of sex; Jody wrote *Solomon on Sex* (which is out of print, but you can find it used online), and Linda co-wrote (along with Lorraine Pintus) the book *Intimate Issues.* They offer three guidelines for discerning what God permits in sexual expression:

1. Is it prohibited in God’s word?
2. Is it beneficial? (In other words, does it harm people or hinder the sexual relationship?)
3. Does it involve anyone else?

Here’s their list of what God prohibits in His Word:

- Fornication (immoral sex, which is any sex outside of marriage)
- Adultery
- Homosexuality
- Impurity
- Orgies
- Prostitution
- Lustful passions
- Sodomy
- Bestiality
- Incest
- Obscenity and coarse jokes

There is more freedom than there are restrictions for married couples. If God doesn't prohibit something, and it doesn't involve anyone else (whether through video, the internet, print media or in the flesh), and it's acceptable to both people, then God gives a green light and says, "Enjoy!"

The Dillows also provide six reasons God gave the gift of sex:

1. To create life
2. For intimate oneness
3. Knowledge
4. Pleasure
5. Defense against temptation
6. Comfort

As you can see, only one is procreation!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

“Is Oral Sex a Sin?”

Is oral sex a sin? Does it constitute having sex? Can you have and give oral sex and still remain a virgin? Is it okay to have oral sex if you’re in a committed marriage? And if it’s wrong can you tell me where in the Bible it says this?

I’m sorry about the many questions but these questions have been nagging me for quite a while.

Is oral sex a sin?

It’s permitted within marriage (by mutual consent), but a sin outside of marriage. In condemning fornication (some translations call it “sexual immorality”), the Bible says that all sexual activity outside of marriage is sin. It’s not that God is a cosmic killjoy—it’s that He knows the best way to protect us is to keep the extraordinarily powerful nature of sex contained within the safe confines of a committed marriage relationship.

Does it constitute having sex?

Yes. We need to define “sex” more broadly than many people do (such as a former president . . .). There are a great many sexual activities and behaviors that fall in the category of “sex” besides intercourse. Here’s a helpful question to help think clearly about any particular activity, such as open-mouth kissing or oral sex: would you do it with your parent or your pastor? If you shrink back in disgust at the thought, that means it’s sexual. (But holding hands, however, is something you can do with anyone without it being sexual. People often hold hands while praying, for instance. See the difference?)

Can you have and give oral sex and still remain a virgin?

The definition of a virgin is a person who has not experienced

sexual intercourse. It's really more of a biological term than anything else, because the real heart issue is about purity. You can't participate in oral sex outside of marriage and still be pure. So people can be technically virgins and still engage in very sexual behaviors. For example, there is an epidemic of gonorrhea of the throat among American junior-high age kids who are still genital virgins but have infected oral sex. The good news is, someone who has had oral sex outside of marriage can confess it as sin, be cleansed and have his or her purity restored.

> *Is it okay to have oral sex if you're in a committed marriage?*

Yes, as long as both spouses are okay with it. If either one doesn't want it, it would be selfish and unloving for the other one to insist. Also, please see our article, "What's God's Plan for Sex in Marriage?"

> *And if it's wrong can you tell me where in the Bible it says this?*

If you read the Song of Solomon, you can see that God encourages married people to enjoy His gift of sex in all its glory. Jody and Linda Dillow (authors of *Solomon on Sex* and *Intimate Issues*) believe that there are two veiled references to oral sex in the Song of Solomon. Keep in mind that in this biblical book, "garden" usually refers to the wife's genitals, and "fruit" to the husband's:

> (Bride) Awake, O north wind
> And come, wind of the south
> Make my garden breathe out fragrance
> Let its spices be wafted abroad
> May my beloved come into his garden
> And eat its choice fruits! (4:16)

> Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest
> So is my beloved among the young men

> In his shade I took great delight and sat down
> And his fruit was sweet to my taste. (2:3)
>
> *I'm sorry about the many questions but these questions have been nagging me for quite a while.*

I'm glad we could help!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"My Friend is HIV+"

A person I love very much was diagnosed as being HIV positive. He was infected at the age of 16. If he had been diagnosed with cancer or some other disease the first thing people would say or think is "How terrible, I will pray for this person." or "I'm sorry. " They would also wonder about the injustice of it. Unfortunately, that is not the reaction a person gets from the church when they let people know they have AIDS. The first thing they want to know is "How did you get it. "

Because of this reaction my friend has been totally turned off to Christianity. No one at are chuch knew about him because he was afraid of what people would say. Only his family knew. One day at church the subject of AIDS came up and quickly his fears were realized. Comments such as it being God's judgment and people getting what they deserve for making immoral choices. You should have seen his face. He was shattered. So was I.

I know that not all churches are like this but so far I havn't found one that wasn't. I try and tell myself that this is not our savior talking. If he were here he would forgive and love the person afflicted with this disease. I try to talk to him

about Jesus loving and healing the leper. But faced with what is said in our church its hard for him to remember that.

There are so many people struggling with this terrible disease. People who make the same bad choices lots of teenagers in the church are making, but fortunately they only got pregnant or got someone pregnant. They were lucky enough not to get AIDS. When someone repents, God casts that sin as far as the east is from the west. Too bad we can't do that. It doesn't matter how you got the disease. That person needs to be shown the love of Christ. Don't wait until it's your loved one. Learn the facts about this disease. CHURCH, I beg of you don't let ignorance stop you from being a witness. We are His hands and feet. Lets use them to show a group of people rejected by the church His love. God has not rececte those who have AIDS. He is loving them and He is expecting us to do the same. Please pray about this issue.

I am so very, very sorry to hear about this horrible experience. You are so right about the church's judgmental reaction and how it grieves not only the person who has it, and the people who love him, but the Father's heart.

The reason it's so easy for people to react so strongly is that, unlike cancer or stroke or other life-stealing disease, HIV is usually contracted through an immoral lifestyle choice, either sex or drugs. But, of course, as the disease has spread, innocent people get it from those who weren't innocent, and the accompanying unfair judgment just adds to the pain.

You're right, too, all churches aren't like this, but it's hard to find a grace-based church that knows the truth about how God accepts us no matter what. Our church, for example, embraced a man who eventually died of AIDS, and he was greatly loved. But part of that process was educating them about their own risk to exposure to him, and assuring them that unless they came in contact with his body fluids they had nothing to

worry about. Which is why some of us particularly delighted in hugging him and kissing him on the forehead to communicate that we cared.

Let me share something someone e-mailed me. I love this story and I bet you will too.

> ***Slandering The Blood of Jesus*** *One night in a church service a young woman felt the tug of God at her heart. She responded to God's call and accepted Jesus as her Lord and Savior. The young woman had a very rough past, involving alcohol, drugs, and prostitution. But, the change in her was evident. As time went on she became a faithful member of the church. She eventually became involved in the ministry, teaching young children. It was not very long until this faithful young woman had caught the eye and heart of the pastor's son. Their relationship grew and they began to make wedding plans. This is when the problems began. You see, about one half of the church did not think that a woman with a past such as hers was suitable for a pastor's son. The church members began to argue and fight about the matter. So they decided to have a meeting. As the people made their arguments and tensions increased, the meeting was getting completely out of hand. The young woman became very upset about all the things being brought up about her past. As she began to cry the pastor's son stood to speak. He could not bear the pain it was causing his wife to be. He began to speak and his statement was this: " My fiance's past is not what is on trial here. What you are questioning is the ability of the blood of Jesus to wash away sin. Today you have put the blood of Jesus on trial. So, does it wash away sin or not?" The whole church began to weep as they realized that they had been slandering the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Too often, even as Christians, we bring up the past and use it as a weapon against our brothers and sisters. Forgiveness is a very foundational part of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. If the blood of Jesus does not cleanse the other person completely then it cannot*

cleanse us completely. If that is the case, then we are all in a lot of trouble. What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus…. end of case!!! God Forgives.. So should we.

Bless you, _____.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

"Help! My Boyfriend's Not a Virgin and It's Killing Me!"

Dear Dr. Bohlin,

I read your article regarding sexual purity, and I am forever grateful to God that He has given me strength to resist the temptation for 27 years of my life. Boyfriends come and go, yet I still manage to keep that area pure. I am now in a very serious relationship with a guy that I have known for a long time. He is a great person, very smart, and an active member of church. As we discussed the subject of sex, I recently learned that he's not a virgin, as I had suspected from the tears in his eyes. He told me that he had to come clean before we go further in our relationship. It was his biggest mistake that he gave in to temptation, and he withdrew from all church activities and didn't take the holy communion until he felt that God has forgiven him.

The thing is, the fact really tore my heart. I told him that I needed time to get used to this, to re-think about the whole relationship, and to pray to God for strength. I love him very

much, and he loves me.

Even though now the sting doesn't hurt me like in the beginning, sometimes my own imagination still tortures me. I never asked him if he slept with anybody else beside that one person. Part of me wants to know more details about his sexual past (all these times, I assume he only slept with one woman), but the other part of me is afraid of the consequences from knowing more details. What should I do? How much details should I know? He has assured me that we will put God first in this relationship, and we will help strengthen and guard each other as we grow closer in the relationship to resist sexual temptations. So far, we've been doing very well.

He's not a player type, everybody knows that. But why did he fall into temptation. . . somehow I don't understand the contradiction. He's not the type that would do such a thing, he even told me that, but somehow, it was like being hypnotized, he gave in to sin. *sigh* Tonight, my imagination is running wild again, the thought of him sharing his body and soul with someone really hurt me. So I decided to write you for advice. Please help me.

Hello _____,

Thank you for writing and I hope I can be of some help to you. I will comment on your situation from a man's perspective, since you are wondering how such a godly man could fall into such a sin. I have asked my wife Sue (below) to comment on your particular predicament dealing with lingering questions and suspicion.

Unfortunately, especially for young men, sexual temptation is very strong. You made no comment about the nature of the relationship that led him onto sin but I would imagine that the woman was not exactly coerced and probably was the instigator of the sexual relationship. Men in general, and introverted men in particular, can be very susceptible to sin

if the woman is the one pursuing or pushing it. The physical attraction for sex is much stronger for men than for women. Women are usually searching for greater personal intimacy while men can be very focused on the physical. If the woman is bypassing the personal intimacy for the sexual, the male finds it very difficult to resist. I have thanked the Lord many times that I have never been pursued sexually. In my younger days this would have been an extreme temptation.

Your boyfriend sounds like a wonderful young man who has sinned, repented and seeks to go on with his life. You can help him greatly by truly forgiving him and deciding to trust him. Everything else you told me makes him sound like a very trustworthy man who fell as we all do. Sue has more to say about your turmoil below.

Dr. Ray Bohlin

Dear _____,

Ray asked for my input as well to give you the fullest answer possible.

I think the enemy is using your boyfriend's fall to torture you, and he's winning. I also think that knowing more details will only make it worse for you because it will fuel your imagination, not bring healing. You are being tempted to obsess over his sin as if you have never sinned . . . and the only person who has a right to do that is Jesus, and He doesn't even think about it! He paid for your boyfriend's sin, and it cost him not only His life but tremendous torture and suffering first. Since your boyfriend has repented and received forgiveness, for you to hold him and yourself in bondage over this incident is elevating yourself above God. I'm sure you don't mean to do that!

There is a difference between goals and desires, and great trouble happens when we confuse them. We can set goals that we have control over, like graduating from college or learning to

rollerblade, but we can't set goals for other people's behavior . . . like a future mate keeping their virginity. It sounds to me like you might have made your future husband's virginity a goal instead of a desire. And when we can't have what we desire, the appropriate response is sadness and then forgiveness, not obsession and anger.

That being said, you have a decision to make. Is marrying a virgin a non-negotiable for you? Is it the most important asset in a potential spouse? Is it so important that you would let go of a long list of positive qualities because they don't count as much as virginity? If so, then stop your relationship right now and acknowledge what it is you want, and tell your boyfriend he can never be good enough for you because he sinned.

On the other hand, if you recognize that you are a sinner as well and you have no right to demand perfection from a husband because you cannot be a perfect wife, then choose to let go of his sin and bury it. And promise both him and yourself to never bring it up again. If you need help forgiving him (and believe me, you haven't forgiven him or you wouldn't be tortured by this), then get Chuck Lynch's excellent book *I Should Forgive, But…* His chapter "I'm Living With the Memories" will help you, but I can tell you right now that the main point is that you can't change what happened, but you can choose how you will live with what happened:

• Bitterness and bondage (being out of control)

-or-

• Forgiveness and freedom (being under control)

In order to truly forgive, we need to choose to accept what happened instead of fighting it.

It sounds like this is a wonderful, godly man who fell into temptation and has resolved not to ever do it again. The fact that he was deeply wounded by his sin and has learned from it makes him an even better man. If you are a woman who deserves him, you will take the hurt over his sin to Jesus and turn it

over to Him and promise never to take it back so that you can move forward.

As I read back over what I wrote, I realize it sounds waaaaay stronger than I would ordinarily be with someone I don't know and whose trust I haven't earned, but I did sense the Lord leading me as I wrote this answer. I sure wouldn't want you trashing a great relationship because of some perceived notion that you are better than him. Virginity is a wonderful gift to give, but it's only one of many blessings that people can give each other in marriage. A wise woman concentrates on what she has instead of what she doesn't have. . . and I do hope you are a wise woman! <gentle smile>

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

"Can You Recommend Some Books to Help Us Teach Our Kids About Sex?"

Can you recommend some books that would be appropriate to use to help teach our childern about the birds and the bees? Are there any written from a Christian perspective? Our children are in 3rd and 5th grades. Thanks for your help!

According to our good friends at Logos Bookstore in Dallas, there is a wonderful series called "God's Design for Sex" by Stan and Brenna Jones, published by NavPress. The first book is for ages 3-5, the second for ages 5-8. The third book, for ages 8-11, is called *What's the Big Deal? Why God Cares About*

Sex. The fourth book, for ages 11-14, is called *Facing the Facts: The Truth About Sex and You.*

Glad to be able to help!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Where Does the Bible Say that All Sexual Activity Outside of Marriage is Sin?"

In your site you talk about how all forms of sexual activity is a sin and that the bible says that "all sexual activity outside of marriage is sin." Please give me verses where this is true because all I can find is how intercourse is wrong outside of marriage. Please also explain how we can define fornication as any sexual activity, who defined this, and how do we know this is God's definition. I appreciate your help.

If you do a word study on "fornication" or "immorality" (which are two ways the Greek work *porneia* is translated), you will find that it means illicit sexual activity. [Note: two very good web sites for doing Bible study are www.blueletterbible.org and www.studylight.org.] Many dictionaries will say "illicit sexual intercourse," but that is unnecessarily narrow. Consider, for example, that Romans 1:29 condemns fornication in the same passage where lesbianism is shown to be sin. Since two women are unable to have sexual intercourse with each other in the same way that a man and a woman do, I believe it would be disingenuous to try and make a case that lesbian sex is not fornication or immorality simply

because of physiology of sex prevents them from having intercourse.

Secondly, consider why it's wrong in the first place: God is pure, and sexual activity outside of marriage is impure. God commands sex to be contained within marriage because it is so powerful; in fact, it is the glue that holds people together and binds their spirits to each other (1 Corinthians 6:16).

Third, if one is trying to make a case that sexual activity short of intercourse is not sin, then I would ask, where do you draw the line? Ask the father of a teenage daughter if it's sin for her boyfriend to touch her genitals, or if God allows this activity with His blessing. Ask the wife of a man visiting a prostitute if it's OK for him to receive oral sex from her as long as they don't engage in intercourse. And if you are bothered by our position that masturbation falls in the category of *porneia*, then I would reply that we have written so extensively on that subject that I'm not going to go further with it. I will say, however, that we recognize not everyone agrees with us on this issue. Nonetheless, we still have a hard time reconciling masturbation with Paul's injunction to "do everything to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Exactly how does one do that to the glory of God?

Hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“My Wife is Seriously Ill: Does That Mean No More Sex Forever?”

I have a serious problem I would like to ask your opinion about. My brain-damaged wife has been unconscious for 5 months and will remain so for the rest of her life. Is it a sin if I masturbate to overcome the sexual need? I have read “Is Masturbation OK When My Wife and I Are Apart?” Does that mean that I may not enjoy sex ever again?

Please accept my deepest condolences on the tragedy you and your wife are experiencing. I pray God’s continuing comfort for you.

I know this is not what you want to hear, but let me ask you a question: if your wife is not available for sex because of her physical condition, how does that make you any different from unmarried men? How does that make you any different from the Lord Jesus, who lived His entire life without being married and thus without any sexual experience?

The way you glorify God in your sexuality when you are unable to enjoy sex with your wife is by giving it to Him as an offering. Does it mean you will go without sex? Quite possibly, unless you remarry after your wife’s death.

It is VERY difficult for those who have experienced sex to go without it after divorce or the death of a spouse, but God’s plan and command is that sex be limited to marriage. I would also point out that while we do grapple with sexual desires and urges, it is not a NEED like food and water and sleep. Calling it a need only makes it worse because we buy into the lie that we must have it, when God has made it off limits for some people.

Again, I am so very sorry for your pain and the fact that you would even be in such a difficult situation that you'd have to wonder about this question.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Is it a sin for a married couple to masturbate during sex?"

Is it a sin for a married couple to masturbate during sex? In many cases a woman can't get an orgasm without proper stimulation.

If a married couple is making love, then nothing they do together is considered masturbation. It's all part of holy sex. (Masturbation is self-pleasure by oneself.)

You're right, most women can't have an orgasm without stimulation, which is how God planned it, I think. . . .the idea being that her husband would be the one to give her pleasure that way. The Song of Solomon even has a verse about the wife asking her husband to do exactly that: "Let his left hand be under my head, and his right hand embrace me." (SoS 2:6).

Nothing a married couple does in the marriage bed is sin as long as it is mutually acceptable and it doesn't involve anyone else (for example, porn movies or fantasies that involve another person). I think God intends for us to experience far more freedom and enjoyment than a lot of people

think! May I suggest you get an EXCELLENT book for married women called *Intimate Issues* by Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus. Absolutely the best book on the subject for women out there, I think. Please also see our article What's God's Plan for Sex in Marriage?"

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries