

# Muslim Beliefs on Sexuality

Islamic teaching on sexual issues varies significantly from a Christian biblical position in several areas. But, as we have seen in other areas, the beliefs of average Muslims do not necessarily follow the teachings of Islam.

[Over the last several months](#), we have been looking at the religious beliefs and practices as expressed by a worldwide, Muslim population in an extensive Pew Research Center survey<sup>{1}</sup> taken in 2012. We have compared those beliefs and practices with those of Americans toward the Christian faith as documented in several recent surveys.

Now, I would like to turn our attention to some cultural beliefs and behaviors. In particular, we will begin by looking at beliefs concerning sexual behavior. Once again the survey data on Muslims will be divided into five regions: North Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Russia, and Turkey), the 'Stans (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), and South Asia.

For this evaluation, we will use questions asked in the Pew survey. The questions are worded, "I personally believe that \_\_\_\_\_ is morally acceptable, morally wrong, or it is not a moral issue." The five topics considered (as they are worded in the survey) are:

1. Sex between people who are not married
2. Homosexual behavior
3. Having an abortion
4. Polygamy (having more than one wife)
5. Divorce

A person following the Qur'an and the Hadith would say that the first two items above are morally wrong while the last two items would be considered morally acceptable with some

constraints. The question about abortion is not directly addressed in the Qur'an or Hadith. The way in which Muslims actually responded is shown in the table below.

**Table 1: Muslims Believing a Behavior is Morally Wrong**

	North Africa	Middle East	Eastern Europe	'Stans	South Asia
Sex outside marriage & Homosexuality	84.7%	88.7%	68.9%	77.2%	84.1%
Abortion	73.2%	64.4%	72.0%	52.6%	83.6%
All of the above	67.5%	66.9%	56.5%	44.3%	77.3%
Polygamy	25.2%	30.1%	73.0%	57.7%	39.8%
Divorce	17.0%	34.2%	20.2%	30.4%	27.8%
All behaviors	7.2%	13.6%	11.6%	13.5%	13.9%

As shown, they are fairly consistent on fornication and homosexuality, with strong majorities stating that they are both morally wrong. However, Eastern European Muslims appear to have been influenced by the culture around them, falling about 16 percentage points lower than the average for other areas in the world.

On the question of abortion, we find a greater variation across geographic areas. Those Muslims in South Asia are most united in their views, with well over 80% of them saying that abortion is morally wrong. In contrast, the Muslims of the 'Stans are about evenly split with just over half saying it is morally wrong. The Middle East is not as strong as one might expect, with about two out of three people agreeing that abortion is morally wrong.

Polygamy, seen as acceptable in the Qur'an with a man allowed to have up to four wives, is seen quite differently in different geographic areas. In North Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia, the majority of Muslims **do not** consider it to be morally wrong. In contrast, in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans, a strong majority of Muslims consider it **to be** morally

wrong. Of course most of the Muslims in Eastern Europe and the 'Stans grew up in the Soviet Union or Soviet bloc countries where polygamy was presumably illegal.

Finally, we see that most Muslims across all geographic locations do not believe that divorce is morally wrong.

If we consider that the Christian Bible teaches us that all of these actions are morally wrong (with some exceptions for divorce), we realize (looking at the bottom row of the table) that nine out of ten Muslims do not agree with that perspective.

Looking at data on similar topics from residents of the United States, we find the following:

**Table 2: American Christians Believing a Behavior is Not Right**

	All	Born Again Christian	All Others	Source
Sex before marriage & Homosexual relations	16.9%	32.8%	7.0%	GSS 2014 <sup>{2}</sup>
Abortion	44.9%	62.0%	34.5%	GSS 2014
All of the above	13.2%	25.6%	5.4%	
Homosexual relations	23.3%	41.7%	13.4%	Baylor 2010 <sup>{3}</sup>
Divorce with children	29.2%	47.1%	19.4%	Baylor 2010

Comparing the two tables and focusing on the Born Again Christian column, we observe that worldwide Muslims are much more likely to see sex outside of marriage and homosexual relations as morally wrong. On abortion, born again Christians have a similar response as Muslims. But born again Christians are more likely to oppose divorce when children are involved than Muslims.

On the whole, it appears that Muslims are more likely to agree with the teachings of the Qur'an than born again, American Christians are to agree with the teachings of the Bible. However, Muslims do not agree with the full set of biblical stances on sexual issues.

## Notes

1. The World's Muslims Data Set, 2012, Pew Research Center – Religion & Public Life. The Pew Research Center bears no responsibility for the analyses or interpretations of the data presented here. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected by James Bell, Director of International Survey Research.
2. General Social Survey 2014 conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected by Tom W. Smith of the NORC.
3. Baylor University. 2010. The Baylor Religion Survey, Wave III. Waco, TX: Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion. The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, [www.TheARDA.com](http://www.TheARDA.com), and were collected by Kevin D. Dougherty, Paul Froese, Andrew L. Whitehead, Jerry Z. Park, Mitchell J. Neubert.

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# Emerging Adults Part 2: Distinctly Different Faiths –

# Evangelical Views Declining

## National Study of Youth and Religion

The National Study of Youth and Religion (Wave 3) contains the detailed data from which Christian Smith presented a summary of the results in his book, *Souls in Transition: The Religious & Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults*. My prior article, ["Emerging Adults and the Future of Faith in America,"](#) summarized some of the important results reported in his book. One of his results showed that the number of young adults who identify themselves as not religious or as a religious liberal has grown from one in three young adults in 1976 to almost two out of three young adults in 2008. This huge difference in beliefs reflects that the dominant culture has changed from supporting Christian beliefs to now being basically counter to them. Today's emerging adults are immersed in a postmodern culture that "stressed difference over unity, relativity over universals, subjective experience over rational authorities, feeling over reason."[{1}](#)

This culture has produced a set of young Americans who may still claim to be associated with Protestant or Catholic beliefs but in reality have accepted the view that God and Christ are potentially helpful upon death, but are of little value until then. As these young adults moved from teenagers into emerging adults, Smith found that over four out of ten of them became less religious over a five year span. However, he did find that about one in three would identify themselves as evangelical and probably continue to identify themselves that way for the foreseeable future.

However, to look at the data more closely, we can access this study of 18- to 23-year-olds online at the Association of Religious Data Archives.[{2}](#) Using this data, we can look at the association between questions in ways that we could not

see in Christian Smith's book. As we studied this data, we found an even bleaker view of the future of the evangelical church than that presented by his book.

Along with general demographic information, the questions asked by the survey can be generally divided into four segments: Religious Beliefs, Religious Practices, Cultural Beliefs, and Cultural Practices. When we analyze the data in these four segments, we find a significant disconnect between each of these four segments. One might expect that we would find a small but significant subset that shared an *evangelical* belief and practice *and* that applied those beliefs consistently to their *cultural* beliefs and practices. Instead, what we find is that of 881 evangelicals, a grand total of zero (that is zilch, nada, none) share a common set of beliefs across all four categories. In other words, there is no set of common beliefs amongst these 18- to 23-year-olds who belong to an evangelical church.

It is worth noting here that the 881 evangelicals discussed here are down from the 1064 evangelicals in the study of this same group as teenagers. The 881 includes 728 who were among the 1064 plus 155 new evangelicals. The new evangelicals were about one-third from mainline protestant, one-third from catholic, and one-third from not religious or non-Christian religions. Of the 336 who left evangelical Christianity about half went to other Christian religions and the other half went to nonreligious or indeterminate religious beliefs. Almost undoubtedly, if we were to include these original evangelicals in our evangelical statistics we would get even worse data. We should also note here that this group was 18 to 23 in 2008 so now they are 20 to 25. However, we will refer to them as 18 to 23 in this article.

## Religious Beliefs

Let us begin by first considering the data on religious beliefs. By itself, this is very interesting. First, we find

that four out of five of those associated with an evangelical church believe in God as a personal being and Jesus as His Son who was raised from the dead. Unfortunately, it also means we are starting with one-fifth of those still associated with an evangelical church who either don't believe in God or in Jesus as His Son. It is interesting to note that one-third of mainline Protestants and nearly half of Catholics have this same attitude of unbelief. However, the number of evangelicals who believe in God and Christ is still a significant number and is 28% of the total population of 18- to 23-year-olds in America. When we add in the mainline and Catholic believers, we find approximately half of all young adults have a correct view of God and Jesus at this very basic level. Although half is not what we would like, it is probably more than we would expect to find with active Christians.

But when we add in the concepts that only people whose sins are forgiven through faith in Jesus Christ go to heaven and that there is only one true religion, the number of evangelicals in this age group who agree drops to 38%. Thus, only one in three ascribe to the most basic beliefs of evangelical Christianity. When we add in mainline Protestants and Catholics, the percentage of young Americans who believe in salvation only through Jesus Christ drops to less than one in five.

When one adds in the concepts that faith is important, that demons are real beings, and that there are some actions that are always right or wrong, and combine those with attending a worship service at least two times a month, the number among evangelicals drops to less than one in five. That is, four out of five young evangelicals do not agree with these basic concepts. For mainline Protestants and Catholics, the percentages are 9% and 2%, indicating that almost none of them have a basic set of Christian beliefs. Combining these together shows that only 7% of all young adults hold to these basic beliefs.

Clearly, we have a major disconnect of belief for this age group, even among those who are associated with an evangelical church. As we probe beyond God and Jesus, we find that most of them do not have a set of beliefs consistent with the basic truths of the Bible.

In his book, Smith points out that for emerging adults “evidence and proof trump blind faith.”<sup>{3}</sup> By this he means that most emerging adults view scientific views as based on evidence and truth while religious beliefs are simply blind faith. As one young person put it, “I mean there is proven fact and then there is what’s written in the Bible—and they don’t match up.”<sup>{4}</sup> Or as another young person put it, “You have to take the Bible as symbolic sometimes. If you take it as literal there’s definitely a problem. There’s scientific proof [that contradicts it]. So you have to take it piece by piece and choose what you want to believe.”<sup>{5}</sup>

The interesting result of this belief is that it does not primarily apply to the extremely small segment of the Bible which some might consider at odds with scientific theories (e.g., creation of the universe). Rather, they apply it to things like teachings on sexuality, the uniqueness of Jesus, and the beginning of life. So they use the excuse of science to modify any beliefs taught by the Bible that are inconsistent with current cultural beliefs.

## Religious Practices

Perhaps we have now found the truly religious 18- to 23-year-olds among the one-out-of-four evangelicals that express a set of core religious beliefs. Even if we add another seven questions on belief in things like life after death, heaven, judgment day, and miracles, we still have almost 15% of evangelical young adults who answer correctly. However, if this 15% is the core group of believers, then their religious behaviors will match their beliefs.



If this group of young adults is the core group, we would expect them to pray on a daily basis and to read the Bible at least once per week. When asked those questions, less than one in ten evangelical emerging adults hold the religious beliefs and engage in the religious practices. In fact, nearly half of those with the core beliefs do not read their Bibles or pray. When we add on questions about whether they are interested in learning more about their faith and have shared their faith with someone else, the number drops to less than one in twenty of the evangelical young adults. So, over 95 out of 100 young people affiliated with evangelical churches do not believe and practice their belief. Sadly, if we look at those who do these things and attend Sunday School or some weekday group and have read a devotional book in the last year, the number drops to 3% of evangelicals.

This data clearly shows that, for 18- to 23-year-old evangelicals, beyond a belief in God and Jesus there is no common set of beliefs and practices. Virtually every evangelical young adult will depart from the faith on one or more basic core beliefs and practices. It appears that there is *no common core group* of dedicated faithful believers among this age group.

As Christian Smith points out, emerging adults view religious ideas as a cafeteria line where you take the ones you like and leave the rest behind. As he says, "People should take and use what is helpful in it, . . . and they can leave the rest. . . . At least some parts of religions are 'outdated.' Emerging adults are the authorities for themselves on what in religion is good or useful or relevant for them."[\[6\]](#) As one of the emerging adults put it, "Instead of fighting various religions, I just kinda combined religious ideas that were similar or sounded good."[\[7\]](#) So, since the emerging adult is the authority on what religious beliefs to accept rather than the Scriptures, their culture determines their religious beliefs rather than the other way around.

# Cultural Beliefs

The data from this survey indicates that there is not a set of doctrinally pure religious believers in the 18 to 23 age range. But perhaps they are clearer on cultural beliefs that should be informed by their faith. To make the analysis easier we will consider two different sets of beliefs. The first set looks at their beliefs about creation, waiting on sex until marriage, and respect for religion in America. The second set considers living meaningful but not guilty lives, caring about the poor, and being against unmarried sex and divorce.

When asked about the creation of the world, approximately half of the evangelical emerging adults said that God created the world without using evolution over a long period of time to create new species. Only one in four young evangelicals believe they should wait to have sex and don't need to try out sex with their partner before they get married. Interestingly, only 16% of mainline Protestants and less than one in ten Catholic young adults believe the same way. As Smith points out, this belief is odd given the numerous studies which show that couples who do not live together before marriage have a significantly greater chance of success than those who do. Forty-eight percent of evangelicals have respect for organized religion in this country and believe it is ok for religious people to try to convert other people to their faith. However when we combine these three beliefs together, i.e. about creation, sex, and evangelism, we find that only one in ten evangelicals, one in twenty mainline Protestants, and only one in a hundred Catholics agree with all three of these areas. Then when we look to see how many have the religious beliefs and practices *and* believe these cultural topics, we find that only 8 evangelicals (< 1%) and no mainline Protestants or Catholics qualify. Thus, we have only 8 people out of over 2500 who have a consistent set of evangelical religious beliefs, religious practices, and cultural beliefs.

Of course that is only a small subset of the cultural beliefs that should be impacted by our religious beliefs. Let's look at few more. Let's consider those who have not felt guilty about things in their life over the last year, who believe their life is meaningful and that they can change important things in their life as needed. We find that approximately one-third of each of the major groups agree with these statements. If we look at how many don't need to buy more and who care about the needs of the poor, we find that about one in four of all young adults agree with these objectives. However, when we combine these two areas, we find that only about one in ten young adults agree. Now add in the idea that unmarried sex and divorce are not okay, a statement with which 28% of evangelicals and 14% of all emerging adults agree. When we combine all three of these belief areas, we discover that only 2% of evangelicals agree with all three areas. If we combine these areas with religious beliefs and practices, we find that only four evangelicals (or less than one in two hundred) agreed.

When we combine both sets of cultural beliefs with the religious beliefs and practices, we find that there is one emerging adult out of over 2500 who agrees with those beliefs.

In both sets of data above, we considered questions dealing with sexual activity. In the first, we saw that the idea of waiting to have sex until marriage was rejected by three out of four of the evangelical, emerging adults. In the second set of data, we saw that a similar number believe that unmarried sex and divorce are okay. These beliefs are clearly counter to the teaching of Christianity, but they are dominant beliefs among evangelical, emerging adults. As Christian Smith put it, "[M]ost emerging adults reduce a certain cognitive dissonance they feel—arising from the conflict of religious teachings against partying and sex before marriage versus their wanting to engage in those behaviors—by mentally discounting the religious teachings and socially distancing themselves from

the source of those teachings.” In other words, they discount any religious teachings that would discourage them from doing what the culture promotes as acceptable, contrasted with the Bible which says, “Love not the world neither the things of the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, are not of the Father but are of the world.”[\[8\]](#)

## Cultural Practices

Perhaps the disturbing cultural beliefs are belied by the cultural practices. Let’s look at some of the relevant cultural practices addressed in the National Study on Youth and Religion. Let’s begin with the number of people who have not smoked pot or engaged in binge drinking in the two weeks before the survey. Among evangelical, emerging adults over half (54%) have not engaged in these two activities. Of course this also means that almost half of them have engaged in one of both of these activities. Amongst Catholic emerging adults, two out of three have engaged in these behaviors.

How many have not engaged in viewing X-rated videos in the last year or unmarried sex (including oral sex)? This number begins at approximately one third of evangelicals not engaging in unmarried sex but drops to only one fifth when X-rated videos are added. So, 4 out of 5 evangelical, emerging adults are engaged in sexual sin, most of them on a regular basis.

On another venue of behavior, how many emerging adults have given money for charitable purposes, volunteered, and don’t admire people based on how much money they have? We find that approximately 15% of evangelicals, mainline Protestants, and Catholics have done so. So, over 8 out of 10 have not given of themselves to help others.

Certainly Christians are called to “give thanks in all circumstances” (1 Thess. 5:18) and to “set their minds on heavenly things” (Col. 3:2). So let’s consider those who are

grateful for the present and sometimes think about the future. This includes about half of all emerging adults. Thus, over half of emerging adults seldom give thanks and rarely think about the future.

Now let's combine these thoughts and actions together and we find that only about 2% of all emerging adults hold to a biblical set of practices. So even though over half hold to a belief in abstaining from drugs and binge drinking, one-fifth affirm abstaining from illicit sexual activity, half hold to an attitude of gratitude for the present and the future, and 15% have given in some way of their time or money, when you combine them together only 2% have done all four items.

If we combine the four categories, Religious Beliefs, Religious Practices, Cultural Beliefs, and Cultural Practices, we find that no one holds to the set of beliefs which are most consistent with Scripture.

## Conclusions

There are many conclusions that could be drawn from the data above. Two of the most important conclusions are as follows. First, the basic religious beliefs of emerging adults largely depart from the Bible, and when you add in religious practices and cultural beliefs and practices we find that no one maintains a distinctly biblical worldview. Second, there does not appear to be uniformity in the beliefs of emerging adults. Rather than having a subset of evangelicals, say 15%, holding to a distinctly biblical worldview, you end up with none because they trip up in different areas.

As Christian Smith pointed out, "emerging adults felt entirely comfortable describing various religious beliefs that they affirmed but that appeared to have no connection whatsoever to the living of their lives."[\[9\]](#) This is because religious teachings are not the authority on this world. Rather, it is what you choose to believe that is your authority for the

“truth” in your life. As one emerging adult put it, “I think that what you believe depends on you. I don’t think I could say that Hinduism is wrong or Catholicism is wrong . . . I think it just depends on what you believe.”<sup>{10}</sup> This concept results in a set of evangelical, emerging adults who don’t hold to a set of common beliefs about God, Jesus, religion, and cultural practices, but instead hold to a wide variety of beliefs which are counter to the Bible. We must not say because they go to church that they believe the truth of the Bible. This survey shows that almost certainly they do not.

At Probe, we are committed to making a difference in this emerging generation. Over the next decade, we are committed to freeing the minds of 50 million Christians and converting them into confident ambassadors for Christ. If we and others like us are not successful, the children of these emerging adults may have no Christian example to follow.

## Notes

1. Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 101.

2. [www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/NSYRW3.asp](http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/NSYRW3.asp), “The National Study of Youth and Religion, [www.youthandreligion.org](http://www.youthandreligion.org), whose data were used by permission here, was generously funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., under the direction of Christian Smith, of the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame.

3. Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 158.

4. Ibid., 158.

5. Ibid., 158.

6. Ibid., 157.

7. Ibid., 157.

8. 1 John 2:15-16 (NASU)

9. Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 155.

10. Ibid p. 156

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**See Also:**

[Emerging Adults and the Future of Faith in America](#)

[Emerging Adults A Closer Look](#)

[The Importance of Parents in the Faith of Emerging Adults](#)

[Cultural Captives – a book on the faith of emerging adults](#)

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## **“Will God Punish Me Forever for My Mistakes?”**

I am so depressed right now because I feel all the mistakes in my past mistakes are so many that I won't have a good future.

I'm 29 years old and I had 2 abortions before I was 20. Two years ago I slept with my boyfriend even though I was already a Christian; we went our separate ways because of this. (He's also a Christian.) I have been single ever since and I have been told that I am being punished for all my sins. Does this mean because of what happened in my past I will never find peace, joy or fulfillment? Does this mean God will never trust me with a relationship again? Will I have to pay for the rest of my life?

Will He refuse to forgive me since I made the mistakes when I was already a Christian? I have been so tormented by all this and I am in constant pain—my heart aches. I really don't know

**what to do, I have prayed and asked for forgiveness, don't know what else to do. All I feel is guilt, guilt, guilt.**

Oh, you precious girl! I have such wonderful news for you!! Your flesh and Satan have been doing a number on you, pouring guilt and self-condemnation onto you all this time . . .when God has been standing there, extending grace and mercy and complete forgiveness to you, wanting you to receive it, but you haven't been able to see it.

How do I know this?

Because of "the Christian's bar of soap," 1 John 1:9—"If we confess our sins [and you have, over and over and over, right?], He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness." Note that God does two things when we confess: 1) He forgives us, which means He sends them away forever, and 2) He cleanses us of ALL unrighteousness, making our souls clean and pure as snow. What's missing for you is the decision to consciously RECEIVE His forgiveness and cleansing.

Are you being punished for your sins? Well, consider this: there is a difference between punishment, which includes wrath being poured out on us, and the consequences of our choices, which is loving discipline. Romans 8:1 says that there is NO condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because the Lord Jesus took all of the Father's condemnation on Himself on the cross. So God is not punishing you. Are you experiencing consequences for your sinful choices? Maybe in the beginning. But from what you describe to me, with peace, joy, and fulfillment eluding you, it sounds like you have your cup upside down, which is preventing you from receiving any new blessings from God because of the mistaken belief that you are still under condemnation.

No, beloved sister, you will not have to pay for the rest of your life. What God wants is repentance, and you have already



done that. Scripture says that godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Cor. 7:10), but there is a worldly sorrow, fed by our own flesh or by demonic forces in temptation, that leads to death. And that's where you've been living, hasn't it? Camped out in a living death?

I would love to lead you in a prayer to receive God's forgiveness and cleansing. May I also suggest that you do something physical to make it more real: lift up your arms, palms up, like a small child ready to be picked up by her daddy: *Dear Father, I want to turn my cup right-side up and receive all the forgiveness and cleansing You have for me. I make a choice today to open my heart to You and let You love me, let You forgive me, let You cleanse me from all unrighteousness. Thank You for exchanging my sin for Jesus' righteousness. Thank You that Your word is true, that because I have confessed my sins, You are faithful and just to forgive me of my sins and cleanse me of all unrighteousness. I receive it in Jesus' name.*

From here on out, every time the old feelings of condemnation and guilt pop up (and they will, because they have become a habit), go back to the Father and thank Him again for forgiving you and cleansing you, and tell Him, "I do not accept those false feelings of condemnation and guilt, but I do receive Your grace, and thank You for loving me, Abba!" It may take awhile for your feelings to catch up with the truth of your decision to receive God's grace, but that's OK. They will. Feelings follow beliefs and actions like a caboose follows the engine of a train.

The Lord bless you this day, \_\_\_\_\_, and I pray that you will hear the love in your Father's voice and see the love in His eyes as you receive His truth through this email!

Warmly,

Sue Bohlin

# **“A Woman Has the Right to Decide What Lives or Not in Her Body”**

I have been reading the “Answers to E-mails” section of your website. I agree with Sue B. I think that there is no room for small minded views in the 21st century. The church’s viewpoint belongs to and was made for a different time. I am particularly concerned about your views on abortion. Do you not think a woman has the right to decide what lives or does not in her body? You make it sound like women that have abortions are cold and do not care about what they are doing. But it simply isn’t like that. Is it better to bring a child into the world that isn’t wanted? I am 17 and I know if I get pregnant now it would ruin my life and the baby’s. I can simply not give that baby the life it deserves and that I want for it. Is it wrong to plan a stable emotional and financial future for your child?

I’m so glad you wrote.

*I have been reading the “Answers to E-mails” section of your website. I agree with Sue B. I think that there is no room for small minded views in the 21st century. The church’s viewpoint belongs to and was made for a different time.*

I think there is an important difference between small-mindedness, and an unpopular insistence on not departing from

what God has revealed to us in His word. "The church's viewpoint" is not timebound and irrelevant; it ultimately comes from God, who created reality and created us and thus has the right to make the rules and dictate the consequences of breaking those rules. One of His rules is, "Don't murder." We can't get away from the fact that abortion is taking the life of one's own child. There are deep and disturbing consequences to making that choice.

*Do you not think a woman has the right to decide what lives or does not in her body?*

Your phraseology needs to be more accurate: it's a "who," not a "what," that lives inside a mother's body. Once a baby has been conceived, it's a whole new human being inside another. I'm sure you want to empower women to control their bodies—but if you take this position, you are only for the empowerment of ADULT women. What about unborn baby girls? They don't have any power, which is why others have to protect them.

I'm all for women controlling their own bodies. . . to prevent conception in the first place. Once a woman gets pregnant, there are two lives involved and not just hers.

*You make it sound like women that have abortions are cold and do not care about what they are doing. but it simply isn't like that.*

I'm sorry, I don't know which article you read. A couple of us have written on abortion. My article [Abortion](#) explores the issue and facts of abortion, but the human, personal aspect is completely different. I know better than to think that women who have abortions are cold and uncaring. I know that abortion absolutely rips apart people's lives. I see for myself the aftereffects of abortion in the guilt and shame that last for years in women's lives, and it is my privilege to minister the truth to them that God wants to forgive and cleanse them of

their sin.

It's one thing to talk about abortion as a way to undo a mistake. . . but it's so important to never lose sight of the fact that it's killing another human being. That is a huge, serious choice to make. (I notice you didn't mention this.)

*Is it better to bring a child into the world that isn't wanted?*

Wanted by whom? There are far more would-be adoptive parents than there are available babies. Furthermore, no baby can be conceived without God calling them into existence; HE wants every single child! If the only one who matters is the pregnant woman, then her innocent baby is nothing more than a commodity on the level of the shoes she tried on but doesn't want to buy.

*I am 17 and I know if I get pregnant now it would ruin my life and the baby's. I can simply not give that baby the life it deserves and that I want for it.*

I'm so glad you see what an unwise thing it would be to get pregnant! Which is why abstaining from sex is the wisest, most mature choice for a number of reasons. And this is also why, if a baby is conceived anyway, giving him or her up for adoption—as excruciatingly painful as it is—is a way to give the baby the life s/he deserves.

*Is it wrong to plan a stable emotional and financial future for your child*

No! It's loving, and kind, and mature. That's why it's important to wait to have a baby until one is married and able to welcome him or her into a loving family.

Thanks for writing.

# Sex Education

Christians are increasingly confronted with arguments in favor of sex education in the public schools. Often the arguments sound reasonable until the scientific reports that advocate these programs are carefully analyzed. I am going to be discussing a number of these studies and will conclude by providing a biblical perspective on sex education.

I want to begin by looking at reports released by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, the research arm of Planned Parenthood. One of these reports was entitled, "Teenage Pregnancy in Developed Countries: Determinant and Policy Implications."

Alan Guttmacher was president of Planned Parenthood from 1962 until his death in 1974, so it is not surprising that the Guttmacher report supports the Planned Parenthood solution to teenage pregnancy. The Guttmacher report concludes that the adolescent pregnancy rate in the U.S. is the highest among developed nations and implies that this rate will decline if sex-education programs are instituted and contraceptive devices are made readily available.

There are a number of problems with the report, not the least of which is the close connection between the Guttmacher Institute and Planned Parenthood. But even if we ignore this policy-making symbiosis, we are still left with a number of scientific and social concerns.

First, the authors of the report selected countries that had

lower adolescent pregnancy rates than the U.S. and looked at the availability of contraceptive devices. But what about countries like Japan, which has a very low teenage pregnancy rate but does not have a national sex-education program? Japan was excluded from the final “close” comparison of countries. In a footnote, Charles Westoff says that “conservative norms about early marriage and premarital sex may explain this phenomenon better than the availability of fertility control.” So we are given only a selected look at developed countries; those with conservative morality (like Japan) were excluded.

Second, the researchers cite statistics that make a case for sex education but seemingly ignore other statistics of concern to society at large. For example, the Guttmacher report suggests we can learn a great deal from Sweden’s experience with sex education, which became compulsory in 1954. While it has a much lower teenage pregnancy rate than the U.S., Sweden has paid a heavy price for this rate. Here are a few crucial statistics that should have been cited along with the Guttmacher report.

From 1959 to 1964, the gonorrhea rate in Sweden increased by 75 percent, with 52 percent of the reported cases occurring among young people. Between 1963 and 1974, the number of divorces tripled and the number of people bothering to get married dropped 66 percent. By 1976, one in three children born in Sweden was illegitimate, despite the fact that half of all teenage pregnancies were aborted.

So while it is true that the teenage pregnancy rate in Sweden is down, the percentages of venereal disease, illegitimate births, and teenage disillusionment and suicide are up.

## **School-Based Health Clinics**

With more than one million teenage girls becoming pregnant each year, family-planning groups are pushing school-based health clinics (SBCs) as a means of stemming the rising tide

of teenage pregnancy.

These groups argue that studies of teen sexuality demonstrate the effectiveness of these clinics. Yet a more careful evaluation of the statistics suggests that SBCs do not lower the teen pregnancy rate.

The dramatic increase in teen pregnancies has not been due to a change in the teen pregnancy rate but rather to an increase in the proportion of teenage girls who are sexually active (28 percent in 1971, 42 percent in 1982). The approximately \$500 million in federal grants invested in sex-education programs since 1973 has not reduced the number of teen pregnancies. So proponents now argue that health clinics located in the public schools can reduce the rate of teen pregnancy by providing sex information and contraception.

The most oft-cited study involves the experience of the clinic at Mechanics Arts High School in St. Paul, Minnesota. Researchers found that a drop in the number of teen births during the late 1970s coincided with an increase in female participation at the SBCs. But three issues undermine the validity of the study.

First, the Support Center for School-Based Clinics acknowledges that "most of the evidence for the success of that program is based upon the clinic's own records and the staff's knowledge of births among students. Thus, the data undoubtedly do not include all births."

Second, an analysis of the data done by Michael Schwartz of the Free Congress Foundation revealed that the total female enrollment of the two schools included in the study dropped from 1268 in 1977 to 948 in 1979. The reduction in reported births, therefore, could be attributed to an overall decline in the female population.

Finally, the study shows a drop in the teen birth rate, not the teen pregnancy rate. The reduction in the fertility rate

was probably due to more teenagers obtaining an abortion.

A more recent study cited by proponents of clinics is a three-year study headed by Dr. Laurie Zabin at Johns Hopkins University. She and her colleagues evaluated the effect of sex education on teenagers. Their study of two SBCs showed a 30 percent reduction in teen pregnancies.

But even this study leaves many unanswered questions. The size of the sample was small, and over 30 percent of the female sample dropped out between the first and last measurement periods. Moreover, the word abortion is never mentioned in the brief report, leading one to conclude that only live births were counted. On the other hand, an extensive national study done by the Institute for Research and Evaluation showed that community-based clinics used by teenagers actually increase teen pregnancy. A two-year study by Joseph Olsen and Stan Weed (*Family Perspective*, July 1986) found that teenage participation in these clinics lowered teen birth rates. But when pregnancies ending in miscarriage or abortion were factored in, the total teenpregnancy rates increased by as much as 120 pregnancies per 1000 clients. Olsen and Weed's research had been challenged because of their use of weighting techniques and reliance on statewide data. But when they reworked the data to answer these objections for a second report, the conclusion remained.

School-based health clinics are not the answer. They treat symptoms rather than problems by focusing on pregnancy rather than promiscuity. And even if we ignore the morality of handing out contraceptives to adolescents, we are left with a claim that cannot be substantiated.

## **Planned Parenthood**

Planned Parenthood has been running ads in newspapers around the country that adopt a lesson from George Orwell and engage in a heavy dose of "newspeak." One ad, for example, contains



an impassioned plea for the continued legalization of abortion by defeating what they call “compulsory pregnancy laws.”

I take it that by “compulsory pregnancy laws,” they mean anti-abortion laws. But the ads seem to imply that the people who want to stop the killing of unborn babies are also bent on coercing women into getting pregnant. That is not what the ads really mean, but isn’t it a bit odd to label laws against abortion “compulsory pregnancy laws?”

Another ad carries the title, “Five Ways to Prevent Abortion (And One Way that Won’t).” According to the ad, outlawing abortion won’t stop abortions. But it will. While it may not stop all abortions, it certainly will curtail hundreds of thousands that are now routinely performed every year. And it will force many women who presently take abortion for granted to consider what they are doing.

But what are some of the ways Planned Parenthood suggests will stop abortion? One of their proposals is to “make contraception more easily available.” The ad states that, since the early 1970s, Title X for national family planning has been supported by all administrations except the Reagan and Bush administrations. The ad therefore encourages readers to lobby for increased funding of Title X.

By the way, Planned Parenthood has been the largest recipient of Title X grants. In other words, the solution to abortion requires we give more of our tax dollars to Planned Parenthood.

Foundational to this proposal is a flawed view of teenage sexuality that sees cause-and-effect in reverse order. Accepting a distorted fatalism that assumes teenage promiscuity as inevitable, Planned Parenthood calls for easy access to birth control. But isn’t it more likely that easy access to contraceptives encourages easy sex? Another proposal listed in the ad is to “provide young people with a better

teacher than experience.” As commendable as that suggestion may sound, what is really being proposed is increased funding for sex-education courses in public schools and the community. Again, notice the presupposition of this proposal. The ad writers assume promiscuity and propose further sex education in order to prevent pregnancy. The emphasis is on preventing pregnancy, not preventing sexual intercourse.

Hasn’t Planned Parenthood ignored a better option? Isn’t chastity still the most effective means of preventing pregnancy as well as a multitude of sexual diseases? Shouldn’t we be encouraging our young people to refrain from sex before marriage? Shouldn’t we teach children that premarital sex is immoral?

Arguments for sex education frequently ignore the reality of human sinfulness. We simply cannot teach sexuality in the schools and expect sexual purity unless we also teach moral principles. The greatest problem among young people today is not a lack of education, but a lack of moral instruction.

## **Parental Notification**

Next I want to focus on state laws that require parental notification when minor children are given prescription birth-control drugs and devices.

Opponents refer to these requirements as “squeal rules” and denounce them as an invasion of privacy. This reaction illustrates how far our society has deviated from biblical morality.

High-school students must routinely obtain parental consent in order to go on field trips, participate in athletics, or take driver’s education classes. Many school districts even require parental consent before a student can take a sex-education class. But opponents of parental notification believe these regulations constitute an invasion of privacy.

Critics argue that such regulations will not change the sexual mores of our teenagers. Perhaps not, but they do encourage parental involvement and instruction in the area of sexual morality. The moral burden is placed upon the parent rather than the family- planning clinic.

Without such rules, government ends up subverting the parent's role. Each year taxpayers subsidize thousands of family-planning clinics that provide medical treatment and moral counsel, yet balk at these meager attempts to inform parents of their involvement with their children.

Ultimately, who has authority over teenagers: the clinics or the parents? Opponents of these "squeal rules" would have you believe that these clinics (and ultimately the government) are sovereign over teenagers. But parents are not only morally but legally responsible for their children and should be notified of birth- control drugs and devices dispensed to teenagers.

But even more important than the question of authority is the question of morality. Premarital sex is immoral. Just because many teenagers engage in it does not make it right. Statistics are not the same as ethics, even though many people seem to have adopted a "Gallup poll" philosophy of morality.

Critics of the squeal rule believe government should be neutral. They argue that government's responsibility does not include "squealing" to teenagers' parents. But in this situation an amoral stance is nothing more than an immoral stance. By seeking to be amoral, government provides a tacit endorsement of immorality. Secretly supplying contraceptives through government-subsidized clinics will not discourage premarital sex. It will encourage teenage sexual promiscuity.

Again, critics of the squeal rule see cause-and-effect acting in only one direction. They contend that the fact of sexually active teenagers requires birth control clinics. But isn't the reverse more accurate? The existence of birth control clinics,

along with the proliferation of sex-education courses, no doubt contributes to teenage promiscuity.

Experience with these rules shows that parental notification will increase parental involvement and thus reduce teenage pregnancy and abortion. Parents should not be denied the opportunity to warn their children about the medical, social, and moral effects of premarital sex.

Make no mistake—parental notification laws will not stop teenage promiscuity; secrecy, however, will do nothing but ignite it.

## **A Biblical Perspective**

I would like to conclude with a biblical discussion of sex education. As Christians, we need to understand the basic assumptions behind the movement to place sex-education programs and clinics in public schools.

Proponents of sex education often make naturalistic assumptions about human sexuality. They tend to argue as if young people were animals in heat who are going to have sexual relations despite what is taught at home, in church, and in school. The Bible clearly teaches that we are created in the image of God and have the capacity to make choices and exercise self-control. Sex-education advocates would have us believe that young people cannot exercise sexual control; thus we must capitulate to the teenager's sexual urges.

A second false assumption is the tendency of sex-education programs to ignore human sinfulness. Although we are created in the image of God, we all are born with a sin nature. Frequently, sex education panders to that fallen nature.

We cannot teach sexuality and expect sexual purity without also teaching moral principles. Most sex-education programs present data in a so-called value neutral way. But, in trying to be amoral, these program become immoral. Human sexuality

must be related to moral values. Young people need information about sex, but it must be placed in a moral context. The greatest problem among young people today is not a lack of education about sex, but a lack of moral instruction about sex.

I believe we are involved in a moral civil war over teenage sexuality. Here is how we lost a number of battles. First, the old morality was declared passe. The sexual revolution in the 1960s made words like virginity, celibacy, purity, and chastity seem out of date. In previous generations, peer pressure kept young people from sex; today, peer pressure pushes them into it.

We lost a second battle when we turned sexuality over to scientists and took it away from moralists and theologians. Alfred Kinsey's studies "Sexual Behavior in the Human Male" (1948) and "Sexual Behavior in the Human Female" (1953) presented comprehensive statistics, but no moral reflection. Today, discussions about sex are supposed to be done in value-neutral settings. Inevitably, demographics determine morality.

What is the solution? Christians must reassert their parental authority and instruct their children about God's view of sex. We must teach them to flee fornication just as Joseph did in the Old Testament. We must teach them to avoid temptation by making no provision for the flesh. We must teach them to exercise self-control in every area of their lives, including the sexual. In other words, we must educate them about the dangers of premarital sex and the wisdom of obeying God's commands regarding human sexuality. Instead of capitulating to teenager's sexual urges, as sex-education advocates want us to do, we should provide them with biblical principles and moral leadership in the area of sexuality.

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# **“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

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## **“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 word *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](http://www.blueletterbible.org) and [www.studylight.org](http://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

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## **"Where does the Bible Talk About Unmarried Sex?"**

I am a single Christian and I do believe in abstaining from sex until marriage. But I have a friend who is also a

Christian and is having sex outside of marriage with her boyfriend (both are single).

I have always believed that the Bible teaches that you shouldn't have sex outside of marriage, but when I went to look for scriptures that teach this, I couldn't find any. I found plenty about not sleeping with relatives and animals and such, but nothing about unmarried sex.

Can you tell me where the Bible teaches that you shouldn't have sex outside of marriage?

*Kerby Anderson answered:*

I typed in the word "premarital sex" on the Probe web site ([www.probe.org](http://www.probe.org)) and got back 16 matches. I might encourage you to look at my article on "[Teen Sexual Revolution](#)" along with the article by Ray Bohlin on "[Sexual Purity](#)" and the article by Jerry Solomon and Jimmy Williams on "[Why Wait Until Marriage](#)."

Perhaps the reason you are having difficulty finding verses on premarital sex is due to the fact that the Bible uses words or phrases like fornication, sexual immorality, or youthful lusts. If you put these terms in a search engine, you will find numerous verses in the Bible dealing with premarital sex.

Thanks for writing, and stay pure.

Kerby Anderson  
Probe Ministries

*Dr. Ray Bohlin answered:*

The term fornication, or in more modern translations, sexual immorality, simply refers to all sexual activity outside of marriage. Below is the first paragraph under "fornication" in the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1975, Vol. 2, p. 601:

“Four different NT meanings are obvious. 1. In 1 Corinthians 7:2 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Paul is warning unmarried people about the temptation to fornication. In both cases fornication refers to voluntary sexual intercourse of an unmarried person with anyone of the opposite sex. The meaning is specific and restricted. In four other passages fornication is used in a list of sins which includes “adultery” (Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:21; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19). Since adultery involves a married person, the meaning of fornication in these passages is specific and restricted, involving unchastity of unmarried people.”

Later the same entry relates,

“Jesus related fornication to adultery when he said “Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully (i.e. with a thought of sexual intercourse) has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28). R. C. H. Lenski interprets the “everyone” to include both men and women and both married and unmarried. Thus Jesus was saying that sexual intercourse of unmarried people (fornication) is as evil as extra-marital sexual intercourse (adultery).”

The entry closes with this statement:

“Those who state that the NT makes no reference to permarital sex relations and gives no advice on the personal and social problems involved are overlooking the NT use and meaning of the word fornication, esp. in such passages as 1 Corinthians 7:2 and 1 Thessalonians 4:3.”

Please also note that Paul closes his discussion of sexual immorality in 1 Cor. 7 with verses 8 and 9. “But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I (verse 8). But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn (verse 9).” I’d say he felt rather strongly about it.

While the Scripture is very clear concerning the immorality

and sin of pre-marital sex, these verses also need to be shared with humility and gentleness with the end of restoring a brother and sister in Christ, not driving them away. The truth of God's word convicts on its own. A spirit of judgment can often be counterproductive.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **“Does Fornication Ruin Your Life Forever?”**

I recently had a child outside of marriage. Upon being brought up inside the church with a family who have strong Christian beliefs, I found pregnancy to be the most unhappy time of my life, with family sicknesses making me more stressed.

I knew what to expect from my family, with feelings of disappointment all round, but they have grown to be supportive and love my daughter. Although they seem to have accepted the new lifestyle I will lead, I myself cannot come to terms with things.

I constantly go over my mistakes, wishing I could rewind time. I would have done so many things differently. I've been going out with my boyfriend for a long time but I feel we have made so many mistakes. I love my boyfriend to bits and couldn't lose him after nearly four years of going out and don't want to make things sound like he is a mistake. Even more so, when I say I wish this situation had never happened, I feel like I am saying that I wish my daughter wasn't here, which isn't

true because I love her to bits too!

I can't rid the shame I feel and felt throughout pregnancy. I read so many magazines that talked about happy expectant mothers-to-be and how to enjoy pregnancy and the blooming process. I cannot say I felt the same way. Right now I hate everything I have done and feel I have let my family down. I feel all the respect I built up over the years has amounted to nothing.

Not only that but my personal dreams have been affected. By now, I always imagined I'd have a big house, be well into my career and be married with a good Christian man. Instead everything is the total opposite and I feel I no longer have a purpose to serve or way to enjoy life. I feel I've ruined everything. I'd never have thought I'd have ever been in this situation. I saw it happen to friends of mine also in church previously and had deep sympathy for them. But going through it yourself is 100 times worse.

I feel alone, hopeless, depressed, and unloved. My boyfriend wants us to get married, go back to church and get our lives back on track but I don't know how to because all I feel is constant pain and reminders of what I've done. After all, the baby has to be a reminder and I can't forget her. I feel like my mistakes will affect my life forever.

I also feel a slight anger in all of this with myself, my boyfriend and certain friends. I can't understand why I had to be made to be everyone's gossip and selected out of all the girls in the world to be made an example of. I feel so hard done by, especially more so as I was trying ever so hard to change and that was when I was hit with the news. I still hear a couple of my friends talking of their fornication and can't help but feel angry that they are not being frowned upon by the church as people are none the wiser of their goings on, which I know is bad for me to feel, but I am full of all kinds of emotions right now.

**When will the sun shine for me? I can't take much more of these cloudy days?!**

**Very unhappy.**

You have touched my heart with your letter. I am so sorry for the pain you are going through, but I have *such* good news of comfort and HOPE for you! I have a dear friend in our church who was in your exact shoes. God is using Ellen so mightily now, and blessing her life so much, that when people make a list of who is most used by God in our church, she's right up near the top—and that is no exaggeration. I asked her to write a response to your letter, which follows my remarks.

One thing I want to share is that a mark of maturity is the ability to distinguish between a bad choice you have repented of, and the grace of God giving us good things even as a result of that bad choice—like your precious daughter and your boyfriend. You can say that you sinned, that you made a bad choice, and still embrace the goodness of God in giving you two wonderful people who love you, and they don't cancel out each other. That's what grace looks like: God continues to bless us even though we don't deserve it. He's such a good and loving God! He is inviting you to enjoy His blessings with a smile on His face—all you have to do is decide to “turn your cup right side up” to receive the joy of those blessings.

Also, I strongly encourage you to forgive yourself. That's really about embracing God's forgiveness, which He has already given you if you have trusted Christ, but 1 John 1:9 says God not only forgives us, He *cleanses* us from all unrighteousness. Make a decision to “turn your cup right side up” to receive His cleansing, which will wash away the guilt and, in time, the shame you carry.

Enjoy the letter that follows from someone who is praying for you and absolutely understands you.

In His grip,



Sue Bohlin

Dear friend,

When I read your email today I could truly sense the sadness and hurt in your heart. I have prayed for you many times today already. I am deeply sorry for your heartache. But I have a message of hope for you: God loves you desperately and He is a God of second, third, and fourth chances. His arms are outstretched to you, just waiting for you to accept His love and forgiveness.

I could understand your pain because my story is similar to yours. I, too, grew up in a strong Christian home. I trusted Jesus as my Savior when I was five years old. I remember that night clearly, my Mom and Dad had shared with me in God's word that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). That included me. I was a sinner. But, God loved me so much that He provided a way for me to spend eternity in Heaven. He sent his only Son, Jesus, to be born of the virgin Mary, live a sinless life and then die on the cross for all the sins I had (and ever will) commit. Then He was raised from the dead on the third day! The Bible says in Ephesian 2:8-9, "For by grace are you saved through faith, it is a gift of God, not of man, so that no man can boast." By placing my faith in Jesus alone, not counting on anything that I could do, I could spend eternity in Heaven. If you have never made the decision to trust Jesus as your Savior, you can do that right now. It is not enough to know the information, you must receive it as your own.

I did that when I was young, but as I got older, I began to drift away from the Lord.

I, too, got pregnant outside of marriage. I, too, felt like it was unfair that all the other girls who I knew were sleeping with their boyfriends didn't get "caught." I felt the course of my life was altered forever. It wasn't the way

I had planned my life. But, I can tell you, I know now that it was a situation that God allowed for my life so that He could be glorified.

I say that because what I came to understand was that I was living my life according to how I thought it should go and doing whatever I wanted. I know now that getting pregnant was God's way of shaking me by the shoulders and saying, "OK, you did it your way, but I have a better plan for your life. Follow Me now." I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that my precious daughter was a gift from God, not a punishment, to gently push my life back on track. All children are special, but I feel that she saved me from even more potential bad choices had I not become a mother when I did.

I now want to fast forward my life for you eight years. I did marry my boyfriend and we will celebrate our 8th wedding anniversary next month. Our daughter is 7 1/2, and our son is 2 1/2. We are very involved in our church where we serve in the High School ministry. I have shared my testimony several times with many girls. My story, by the grace of God, has been beneficial to many people. I have girls who ask me to keep them accountable for their behavior with their boyfriends. They ask me advice, and God speaks to them through me. Not everyone knows my story, not everyone remembers how my husband and I started out, but, for some, it is a blessing. Maybe God allowed this in my life so I could share my story with you. Maybe there is another girl who you will be able to bless with your story some day.

Satan is the father of all lies and would have loved for me to think that I messed up, so why bother with church, God, or anything like that. He wants you to believe that as well. All your negative thoughts about yourself and situation come from Satan, not God.

God, on the other hand, is the Father in Heaven who loves you so much and wants to pour out blessings on you. Choose

to accept His love. Choose to live in His forgiveness. He wants the absolute best for your life. His plan for your life is perfect. While it is hard to understand why He allowed this in your life, focus your attention on Him. Get to know Him. Listen to praise music and praise God. Allow Him to fill you up. Let God fill the void in your heart. After all, He is the only one who can. Although my husband is a wonderful, fun, sweet, caring man who loves the Lord, if I look to my husband to fulfill all of my needs I will be disappointed. Only God can fulfill my deepest needs and desires. He made us that way.

My story did not turn out great because I married the father of my baby, my story turned out great because I let God lead me and love me. Not all girls in our situations end up marrying their boyfriends, and they can still have a wonderful life and relationship with God.

Some women who have had sex outside of marriage end up with so much guilt that they can't enjoy a sexual relationship when they do get married. That is not what God intends. Sex is a gift to married couples, and God meant for it to be enjoyed, guilt-free. Pray that when you do marry, you will let God take away your guilty feelings so that you can enjoy an intimate relationship with your husband as God intended. I would encourage you to abstain from sex until you do marry. You can start over.

I would also encourage you to go back to church. Hold your head up high when you walk in the door. God loves you. The creator of the universe cherishes you! He is proud to be your Heavenly Father.

While changing your thinking will not be easy, it can be done. Trust God, pray that you can believe the wonderful things about yourself that He thinks about you. Pray with your boyfriend. Thank God for your precious daughter. Thank God that he shook your shoulders, too! This can be a turning

point in your life. Choose to let yourself be loved by God and His people.

I will continue to pray for you, your boyfriend, and your daughter. May the Lord bless you abundantly. If you would like to correspond further, I would be happy to.

By His Grace Alone,

Ellen

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## Why Wait Till Marriage? – A Christian Perspective

*Jimmy Williams and Jerry Solomon take a biblical worldview look at the question of premarital sex or fornication. They clearly show that regardless of the dominant teaching of the culture, the Bible describes the role of sex as far deeper in meaning and impact than simple physical intercourse.*

Crucial moral battles are being fought in our culture. Nowhere is this seen more vividly than in the present sexual attitudes and behaviors of Americans. The average young person experiences many pressures in the formation of personal sexual standards and behavior.

The fact that some standard must be chosen cannot be ignored. Sex is here to stay, and it remains a very basic force in our lives. We cannot ignore its presence any more than we can ignore other ordinary human drives.

This essay explores contemporary sexual perspectives within a biblical framework. Each of us needs to think through the implications of sexual alternatives and choose a personal

sexual ethic based on intellectual and Christian factors, not merely biological, emotional, or social ones.

## Sex and Love

Before we begin our survey of various perspectives, we need to face squarely the relationship of the physical act of sexual intercourse to the more intangible aspects of a meaningful relationship between two human beings.

Is having sex really making love? Modern case studies, psychological insights, church teachings, and biblical premises all seem to suggest not. As psychoanalyst Erich Fromm puts it, "To love a person productively implies to care and to feel responsible for his life, not only for his physical powers but for the growth and development of all his human powers."[\[1\]](#)

If sex is merely a physical thing, then masturbation or other forms of autoeroticism should provide true and complete sexual satisfaction. Such is not the case. Alternatives to normal sexual intercourse may satisfy physically, but not emotionally. Meaningful sexual activity involves the physical union of a man and a woman in a relationship of mutual caring and intimacy.

Every normal person has the physical desire for sexual activity accompanied with a desire to know and be known, to love and be loved. Both desires make up the real quest for intimacy in a relationship; sexual intercourse represents only one ingredient that allows us to experience true intimacy.

A maximum sexual relationship exists where mutual communication, understanding, affection, and trust have formed, and two people have lastingly committed themselves to each other in a permanent relationship. The more of these qualities that are present, the deeper the intimacy and the more meaningful the relationship. It becomes more valuable as

time passes because it is one of a kind— unique. To spread the intimacy around through a variety of sexual liaisons destroys the accumulated value of the previous relationship(s) and dilutes and scatters (in little doses to a number of people) what one has to give.

A real challenge faces young people today. Given the choice between hamburger at five o'clock or filet mignon at seven-thirty, are there any good reasons to forego the hamburger and wait for the filet? Why not both? Why not take the hamburger now **and** the filet later?

The latter attitude is precisely the rationale of those who encourage sexual activity outside of marriage. But it is not possible to have both without encountering problems later. Too many hamburgers ruin one's taste and appreciation for filet and tend to turn filet into hamburger as well!

## **Contemporary Arguments for Premarital Sex**

Now we will begin to consider the arguments that are presented to justify sexual activity before and outside of marriage. We will analyze the arguments briefly and explore the general implications of each rationale so that **you can decide** which will provide the best path for your future.

### **Biological Argument**

Perhaps the most common reason used to justify premarital sexual activity is that the sex drive is a basic biological one. The argument is as old as the Bible, where Paul states in 1 Corinthians 6:13, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food." The Corinthians were using the biological argument to justify their immorality, but Paul explained that the analogy to the sex appetite was (and is) fallacious. 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."

[{2}](#)

While recognizing that human beings share many common characteristics with animals, we do not find comparable sexual behavioral patterns in the animal world. Human sexuality is unique in that it *includes*, but *transcends*, physical reproductive elements. It reaches an intimacy unknown among animals. Humans are different from animals.

## Statistical Argument

A second popular argument reasons that everyone is doing it. First, we must categorically emphasize that this is not a true statement. A recent study (1991) of college freshmen shows that "about two- thirds of men (66.3 percent) and slightly more than one-third of the women (37.9 percent) support the idea of sex between people who have known each other only for a short time."[{3}](#) As sobering as such statistics may be, they obviously indicate that not everyone is sexually active.

Further, **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. 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.

There are enough young people in any school or community who prefer to wait until marriage that the young person who wants to wait has plenty of company. Each person must decide where he or she wants to be in a given statistical analysis of current sexual mores and behavior.

## **Proof of Love**

A third argument suggests that sexual activity tests or provides proof of love. Supposedly, it symbolizes how much the other cares. One therefore exerts pressure on the more reluctant partner to demonstrate a certain level of care. Reluctant partners succumbing to this pressure often do so with an underlying hope that it will somehow cement the relationship and discourage the other partner from searching elsewhere for a less hesitant friend.

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. Some behaviors are irreversible, and this process is like trying to unscramble an egg. Once it's done, it's done.

The broader perspective sees sex as an integral and important part of a meaningful relationship but not the totality of it. Remembering this will help any individual to make the right decision to refrain from sexual involvement if a potential partner puts on the pressure to make sex the test of a



meaningful relationship.

## Psychological Argument

The psychological argument is also a popular one and is closely tied to the biological argument previously discussed. Here's the question: Is sexual restraint bad for you?

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.

In this hedonistic society, some persons need no further justification for sexual activity beyond the fact that it's fun. "If it feels good, do it!" says the bumper sticker. But the fun syndrome forces us to sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.

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. No one likes to be or feel used.

Marilyn Monroe was a sex symbol for millions. She said, "People took a lot for granted; not only could they be friendly, but they could suddenly get overly friendly and expect an awful lot for a very little." [\[4\]](#) She felt used. She

died naked and alone, with an empty bottle of sleeping pills beside a silent telephone. Was the fame and fun worth it? Evidently she thought not.

## **Experiential Argument**

This perspective emphasizes a desire on the part of an individual not to appear like a sexual novice on the wedding night. One answer to this is to have enough sexual experience prior to marriage so that one brings practice, not theory to the initial sexual encounter in marriage. But the body was designed to perform sexually and will do so given the opportunity.

This is not to say that sexual skill cannot be gained through experience. It is to say that every skill acquired by humans must have a beginning point. If the idea of two virgins on their wedding night brings amusement to our minds instead of admiration, it is actually a sad commentary on how far we have slipped as individuals and as a culture.

It must be emphasized again that 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.[\[5\]](#)

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.

## **Compatibility Argument**

A corollary to the experiential argument is the one of compatibility. The idea is, How will I know if the shoe fits unless first I try it on? 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.

## **Contraceptive Argument**

The contraceptive argument supposedly takes the fear of pregnancy out of sexual activity and gives moderns a virtual green light. Actually, the light is at most pale green and perhaps only yellow. The simple fact is that pregnancy (along with sexually-transmitted diseases) remains a possibility.

Beyond the question of contraceptive use is the entire area of unwanted children. There are no good alternatives for children born out of wedlock. Do we have the right to deprive children of life or a secure family setting and loving parents to supply their basic needs? Ironically, even severely battered children choose to be with their parents over other alternatives. Parental love and security are highly prized.

Sexual intimacy between a man and a woman is not exclusively their private affair. Sexual intercourse must take place with a view toward facing the consequences. The time of moral decision in sexual matters comes before one decides to have sex with someone, not later when unforeseen circumstances take things the wrong way.

## **Marital Argument**

Perhaps the most prominent argument for premarital sex among

Christians is the marital argument, which says, "We are in love and plan to marry soon. Why should we wait?"

Dr. Howard Hendricks, an authority on the family, comments that the best way to mortgage your marriage is to play around at the door of marriage.<sup>[6]</sup> 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 the equivalent of dogma. 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. Do they have their fingers crossed?

Contemporary studies indicate that the marital argument is not sound. Of 100 couples who cohabit, 40 break up before they marry. Of the 60 who marry, 45 divorce—leaving only 15 of 100 with a lasting marriage. Thus, cohabitation has two negative effects: it sharply reduces the number who marry, and dramatically increases the divorce rate of those who do.<sup>[7]</sup>

Engaged couples, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:36-37, should either control their sexual drives or marry. Intercourse, then, is not proper for engaged couples. They should either keep their emotions in check or marry.

## Conclusion

We have examined some of the major arguments used to justify premarital sex. If these are the strongest defenses of sex outside of marriage, the case is weak. Our brief trek through the wilderness of contemporary sexual ideas has led to some virtual dead ends.

There are good reasons to make a commitment to limit our

sexual experience to a time when the sex act can be reinforced in a context of permanent love and care. From this perspective, virginity is not viewed as something that must be eliminated as soon as possible, but as a gift to treasure and save for a special and unique person.

The biblical standard that puts sex within the fidelity and security of marriage is the most responsible code that has ever been developed. You are justified in following it without apology as the best standard for protecting human, moral, and Christian values that has been devised.

Some reading this may have already had sexual experience outside of marriage. The data we have discussed is not intended to condemn or produce guilt.

The good news is that Jesus Christ came for the expressed purpose of forgiving our sins, sexual and all other. Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, will forgive us. The real question now is, What shall we do with the future? Christ can cleanse the past, but He expects us to respond to the light He gives us. Hopefully this discussion will help you strengthen your convictions with regard to sexual decisions and behavior in the days ahead. As the adage says, today is the first day of the rest of your life.

## Notes

1. Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).
2. Robert R. Bell, *Premarital Sex in a Changing Society*. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966) p. 150.
3. [Editor's note] We believe this data is from the American Freshman annual study, but unfortunately neither of the authors is able to verify the source.
4. Evelyn M. Duvall, *Why Wait Till Marriage?* (New York: Association Press, 1965, p. 38.
5. William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, *The Pleasure*

*Bond* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), pp. 113-14).

6. Howard Hendricks, lecture at Dallas Theological Seminary. "Christian Home Course," 1978.

7. See Kerby Anderson's article "Cohabitation" at [Probe.org/cohabitation](http://Probe.org/cohabitation).

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