

HELPLINE³

SEXUALITY

**PROTECTING
A PRECIOUS
GIFT**

**LOVE, MARRIAGE
AND SEX**

SONG OF LOVE

In the palace gardens, it is early morning. The air is fresh and the dew is still wet on the leaves. A man is walking through the park, enjoying the warmth of the sun and the joyful song of the birds. Coming towards him from across the field is a graceful and beautiful woman. The man's heart takes a leap. His eyes sparkle. He quickens his step. He holds out his arms to the woman and sings a love song for her:

How beautiful you are, my darling.

Oh, how beautiful!

*Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon,
your mouth is lovely . . .*

You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride;

How beautiful you are and how pleasing,

O love, with your delights.

The woman takes his hand and smiles. She looks at him and picks up his tune, singing the affectionate words for her one and only beloved:

My lover is radiant and ruddy,

outstanding among ten thousand.

His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy

And black as a raven . . .

His mouth is sweetness itself;

He is altogether lovely.

This is my lover, this is my friend . . .

I belong to my lover and his desire is for me.

(This beautifully emotional song was composed by King Solomon and can be found in full length in the Song of Songs, Bible)

These words hold so much tenderness and power. The man is stirred by the woman's beauty and longs to hold and protect her. She admires and trusts him. More than anything else, they want to be together and make each other happy. In close friendship the man and woman walk in the garden sharing their thoughts and embracing each other.

GOD DESIGNED SEXUALITY

From the beginning God designed man and woman as sexual beings, drawn to each other in an intimate, meaningful relationship. Sex was intended to connect them on the deepest level. This relationship involves not only the body but also the mind, feelings and emotions and has the power to form new life. As an expression of love and deep commitment, it requires great responsibility and trust. It can be either thrilling, passionate and deep when used right, or unsatisfying, painful, cruel and dangerous when misused.

God wants to protect and save us. He tells us in the Bible that the only safe place for sex is within the bond of marriage. To be able to find peace in our relationships we need to rediscover the biblical view of sex and apply it in our lives. Only then can an intimate relationship really have a chance to grow and be satisfying.

IN SEARCH OF LOVE

There are many people in this world today who are hungry for love and happiness. Society encourages them in this search and propagates sex as the answer. Images of sex are used to sell everything from chewing gum to cars. We can't use the internet, pick up a newspaper or walk past a billboard without seeing some reference to sex. This surely influences our thoughts and opinions. Sex is seen as an activity

humans have created for themselves, something they have the right to do with anyone at anytime. Because of this selfish attitude, the value of sex is quickly being diminished.

Many people have experienced the pain that wrong sexual behaviour brings. Sometimes they have been hurt by the wrongdoings of others, and sometimes through their own sin. Jackson's story shows that under God's gracious guidance there is a way to find forgiveness and healing in this area of our lives.

JACKSON'S STORY

During his childhood Jackson was often mistreated and put to shame by his father. His mother was sick of all the quarrelling and fighting. When she found out that her husband was seeing other women behind her back, she left him and went back to her village. As a teenager Jackson tried to win approval from the girls and soon had a girlfriend. But when she got pregnant by him, he was angry and forced her to get an abortion. A few weeks after this traumatic experience, he left her for another girl.

From then on he had one affair after another. He even spent his money on prostitutes, but this made him more unhappy, empty and lonely inside. He finally married in the hope that this might solve the problem, but he was not happy. Day and night there was this nagging fear at the back of his mind that he might have AIDS. His relationship with his wife and children was difficult and unsatisfying. How he longed for true love and intimacy.

Whilst in this situation, he met one of his former school friends, who invited him to a Christian camp. There he heard about the love of Jesus Christ. He was deeply touched when he heard that Jesus had died

on the cross to pay for his wrongdoing. But now Jesus was alive, risen from the dead and calling him. Jesus knew all about his messed up sex life, and still he did not reject him. In a dream he saw Jesus reaching his hand out to him and saying: "Jackson, you are precious to me. Come to me and I will give you peace." The pastor encouraged him to talk to Jesus in prayer. "Jesus longs to satisfy your deepest need for intimacy, acceptance and love. Tell him how sorry you are for going the wrong way. Ask him to come into your heart and change your life."

That is exactly what Jackson did. He brought all his guilt and disappointment to the cross of Jesus Christ. In that instant he knew that Christ had forgiven him. Jackson realized who he was now – a child of God, accepted and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. And because of this, Jackson started to obey and practice God's word. He experienced how God changed his whole lifestyle. With time, God even helped him to build up a loving relationship to his wife and family.

MAKING THE RIGHT DECISION

Jackson found love when he accepted Jesus Christ as his Saviour. The crucial question is: Where are we looking for love? Do we turn to God or are we controlled by our own selfish desires? God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). He is the only answer to our search for love. Sexual integrity takes place in relationship with Jesus Christ, who can change our rebellious heart and give us the power to fight against sin.

Sexuality is like a fire. In the fireplace it can keep us warm. But it can get out of control and burn our house down if we are not careful. God's word warns us seriously about wrong sexual behaviour. Let us

remember that as Christians God helps us battle sin and “*we are more than conquerors through him who loved us*” (Rom 8:37).

HOW CAN COUPLES STRENGTHEN THEIR MARRIAGE AND KEEP IT PURE?

- Put God in the centre of your marriage. Grow in your relationship to him by living according to his word. Depend on him for help.
- Learn to communicate effectively. Take time to listen and share with each other. Your spouse cannot know what you are thinking unless you tell him/her. Without communication, two people quickly become strangers who cannot understand each other.
- Encourage your spouse. Be grateful for the things he/she does and let him/her know you appreciate him/her.
- Enjoy each other, make special times when you can work and play together.
- Guard your marriage, run away from temptation and stay true to your marriage vows.
- Satisfy each other, let meeting the needs of your spouse be important to you. Do not deprive each other of sex except by mutual consent and for a time only. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.
- Take time to read the Bible and pray together, to find God’s guidance in your relationship, in making decisions and solving conflicts.

6

Every marriage has its problems. It is important to learn to persevere through hard times. With God’s grace and the commitment to love and forgive each other, even the most difficult marriage relationship can be restored.

UNFAITHFULNESS IN MARRIAGE

Although tolerated and even accepted in our modern culture, any sexual relationship with somebody other than your wife or husband is clearly wrong. God’s word tells us: „*Do not commit adultery*“ (Ex 20:14). „*God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral*“ (Hebr 13:4). If you are married, you have promised to stay faithful to your life-partner. Do not think that your secret actions with another partner are hidden from God. Repent, cut off those wrong connections and make a firm decision to be true to your wife. With God’s help you can **learn to build up a defense against sin:**

- a) ... **with your eyes.** Guard your eyes that they do not linger on objects of lust. Do not argue and find excuses, but flee from sin as Joseph did when he was tempted by his employer’s wife (Gen 39).
- b) ... **in your mind.** Take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). Battle impure thoughts and attractions and remember: Jesus paid for you with his life and has won the victory over the power of sin. You belong to him and sin has no right to enter your life.
- c) ... **in your heart.** Be committed to love, honour and cherish your spouse.

„Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails“ (1 Cor 13).

7

CASUAL SEX

Nowadays many people think that it is o.k. to try out sex before getting married. Why wait? Because God, as the designer of sex, recommends it. He understands better than anyone the powers and dangers of sexuality: „*The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery . . . I warn you as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God*“ (Gal 5:19-20). Consider the high cost of so-called sexual freedom: risk of unwanted pregnancies/abortion, early parenthood, sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, syphilis and others, broken relationships, guilt and emotional scars. It is God’s desire to help us avoid such heartache. Look to God to satisfy your deepest longing and trust him to lead you into a meaningful relationship.

PORNOGRAPHY

Is there anything wrong with viewing sexy pictures? In fact, read what Jesus Christ himself said in Matthew 5:28 „*But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman (or a man) lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*“ Sexual impurity starts with your eyes. Lustful passion is a deadly danger because it never satisfies, the hunger only grows until it consumes you, eats away at your life and you become a slave to pornography. It has a bad effect on your marriage, as it erodes your ability to love. Also, you are hurting and cheating your spouse by your addiction.

This bondage is not what God has intended for you. His calling is to freedom: „*Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*“ (Gal 5:24). As Christians we killed those unclean desires when we died with Christ, and arose to

walk in newness of life. Don’t pick up that dead thing again. That is past and finished. Bring your guilt, lust and impurity to the cross of Jesus Christ and there, dependent on his grace, clothe yourself with righteousness (see Rom 6:11-14). Seek counselling and support from trusted Christians.

PROSTITUTION AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Studies show that many of those involved in prostitution or homosexuality have been deeply hurt in childhood or have grown up in great poverty. Maybe you have chosen this lifestyle yourself; maybe it has been forced on you. If you are weary of struggling with the pain and grip of prostitution, addiction, homosexuality or lesbianism, do not be ashamed to seek help and counselling from a trusted Christian. God hates to see your life being wasted and broken like this. In the Bible we read: „*Do not be deceived: Neither the sexual immoral nor the idolaters nor the adulterers nor male (or female) prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God*“ (1 Cor 6:9). God offers you a way out. He wants you to experience the benefits of his love and forgiveness. The same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead can transform you. By trusting in Jesus Christ, you can receive the strength to live a new, free life in purity. Call to him and he will answer you.

POLYGAMY

God’s plan does not include polygamy but stresses faithfulness between one man and one woman in marriage. Nevertheless certain societies practice and justify polygamy, quoting examples of biblical patriarchs. But was there ever real peace in those communities? How

can one man share his love equally between several women, when he was created to love only one? Avoid jealousy, fighting and even financial problems from the beginning; marry only one wife and stay faithful to her. However, if you already have more than one wife, humble yourself before God, carry the responsibility and continue caring for all of them to the best of your ability.

TAKING ADVANTAGE

Maybe you are familiar with the story of Samson and Delilah (Bible, Judges 16). It illustrates what a powerful tool sexuality is. Samson, the strongest man on earth, fell in love with Delilah from the enemy tribe and was blind in his burning lust for her. Delilah took advantage of him and betrayed him, which led to great suffering and eventually to his death and to the death of his enemies. Have you ever been cheated and taken advantage of? This is most degrading and painful. God knows about your heartache. Read the Bible, pray and seek his love and comfort. He will never disappoint you.

A word of encouragement for men: Care for your wife and express your love for her. Show your strength, not by taking advantage of her weakness and hitting her but by treating her with love and respect. Be a man and control your body in a way that is holy and honorable (see 1 Thess 4:3-8).

10 **A word of encouragement to women:** Be loyal to your husband. Do not take advantage of him. Love and support him by behaving properly and dressing modestly. Be careful not to attract the attention of other men by flirting with them, or wearing sexy clothes. Wherever we are, we should strive to help each other in the fight against sexual impurity, not make it more difficult.

A word of encouragement to children and young women:

Although there are laws against child abuse, female genital mutilation, rape and the sex industry, many offenders get away with their crime. The victims are left poor and helpless. This is not right. If you are in this situation, be encouraged to defend yourself. Dare to say no and seek help. If you know of anybody who is threatened in this way, ask God in prayer to show you how to give them hope and love. Professional organisations like www.safoundation.com in the internet give practical suggestions on how to combat sexual exploitation.

BE A GOOD EXAMPLE

We, who belong to Christ, should set a good example, staying clear of all forms of impurity and sexual immorality. Nobody, not even the very best Christian leader is immune to sexual temptation. There is a battle to fight. But through the power of Jesus Christ and his blood, God has already provided us with the ability to be free from all bondage of sexual wrongdoing.

What do we do if Christians practice sexual immorality in the church in which we are responsible? It is wrong to turn a blind eye. We are to be good shepherds of the flock, called to warn people according to the teachings of Scripture lest we are held responsible for such wrong tolerance. As members of the church we should not condemn the sinner but help him leave his life of sin. In the story of the adulterous woman in the Bible (see John 8:7-11) Jesus said, „If anyone is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.“ **11** *When all the accusers had left, Jesus asked her, „Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?“ „No one sir,“ she said. „Then neither do I condemn you,“ Jesus declared. „Go now and leave your life of sin.“*

A NEW START

If you have sinned, don't blame God but face the consequences. Straighten out your life and say:

„Lord, I am sorry for what I did (*name it!*). Please forgive me. I commit myself to you. I now count myself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ. With your help I will no longer offer any part of my body to sin because you paid a high price for me. I choose to live a pure life because you have given me life. May my body, emotions, mind and spirit be committed to you.“

That is the turning point. That is the choice to be made today: Go now and leave your life of sin. Seek help from other Christians to help you stay on the right path. It might also be wise to see a professional Christian counsellor. May God bless you and help you always to make the right choices.

DM/DCL-team

Sources: NIV Bible / Focus on the family, Dobson / www.biblebb.com, J. MacArthur

The following titles are also available in this series:

HELPLINE 1 – ALCOHOL, THE FRIENDLY KILLER

HELPLINE 2 – SMOKING/DRUGS

HELPLINE 4 – HIV/AIDS