

***Question: Why are Christians so strongly opposed to sexual relationships outside of marriage?***

Christians believe that God ordained the sexual relationship for husbands and wives in a loving and committed relationship. This sexual relationship was intended not only for procreation, but also as a beautiful, pleasurable expression of love toward one another (Proverbs 5:18-19; The Song of Solomon; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; Hebrews 13:4). However, they also know that the Bible teaches them to “flee sexual immorality” (1 Corinthians 6:18). The biblical word that is translated “sexual immorality” or “fornication” refers to sexual relations between two people who are not married to one another.

Christians understand that their bodies do not belong to themselves to do as they please. They belong to Jesus Christ. The Christians in ancient Corinth had formerly been part of a pagan society that encouraged them to indulge every desire. As Christians, they were taught that the body of a believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit from God and that they had been bought with the price of the blood of Christ. Thus, they were told that they should honor God with their bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). This is why the apostle Paul said, “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Corinthians 6:13).

In addition, the apostle pointed out that when God created the first husband and wife he said, “The two will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Since two bodies joined in the sexual relationship become one, he reasoned that a person who joins his or her body to another in an immoral relationship becomes one with that immoral person. This means that when a person who is one with Christ through faith engages in immorality is joining his/her own body to an immoral person as well as joining Christ to immorality. For a Christian, nothing could have been more abhorrent than to suggest that he/she had been guilty of joining the body of Christ to that of an immoral man or woman (1 Corinthians 6:15-17).

To proclaim that our bodies belong to God for his use instead of for immorality may sound absurd to those who do not believe in Jesus as the Son of God. In fact Cicero, a leading Roman politician and philosopher of the first century B.C. wrote: “If there is anyone who thinks that young men ought not to visit prostitutes, he is certainly narrow-minded (no doubt about it), and completely out of step with our present

liberal thinking. In fact, he has nothing in common with the customs and behavior of previous generations who were quite broadminded on the subject” (Cicero, *Pro Caelio* 48). Some people in today’s world have this same attitude toward the Christian view of sexual relationships between unmarried persons. However, Christians believe this is a dangerous path for a person to follow.

Christians also believe that even if a person has been sexually immoral he can be forgiven and find a new and holy life through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. To the Corinthian believers, the apostle said: “Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Jesus provides the same hope for all of us.

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