

Question: As a young adult I find the messages communicated about sex in our world confusing.

While sexual images designed to arouse us seem to be everywhere, some Christians still condemn sex totally.

How do I make sense of this?

We need to understand that Jesus was not anti-sex. He pointed out that from the beginning God made us “male and female” (Matthew 19:4). Sexuality is not punishment from Satan. It is a gift from God. He could have designed another way for us to reproduce and express loving intimacy, but God chose to make us sexual beings. Yet, Jesus made it clear that for best results, this is a gift to be opened only within marriage. He labeled all sexual relationships outside of marriage as fornication, adultery or sexual immorality. These limitations on sexual activity are intended to protect us, not deprive us of enjoyment.

Jesus also taught that we must strive to control any temptation to lustful thoughts. He said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28). I don’t think he was talking about admiring a person’s beauty or attractiveness. A lustful person looks with the intention of dwelling on sexual fantasies and turning them into more than thoughts. To illustrate how he felt about this, Jesus used hyperbolic language (over-statement for emphasis). He said: “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. . . . And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off . . . It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matthew 5:27-30). Proverbs 6:27 asks, “Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?” In other words do not flirt with temptation! As far as possible, maintain control over your exposure to sexually explicit images. When it is not possible to avoid them, strive to maintain control over your thoughts. Christians have the Holy Spirit in their bodies to help them keep from fornication and sin (1 Corinthians 6:19), but they must want to maintain sexual purity before God.

Maintaining sexual purity today is like running the Boston marathon in the opposite direction. Imagine the stares, laughter and ridicule that would occur if this happened. Those who follow Jesus and live in a way that is opposite the prevailing culture’s sexual immorality face a similar situation. But they are to be admired

for their conviction, courage and determination to do what is right. God will bless them in some surprisingly wonderful ways for doing so. Try it to see if I am right. I would be happy to hear from you whatever the results.

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