

*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?*

The Bible does not teach that sexuality is some kind of punishment from Satan. Instead, Jesus clearly indicated that it is a gift from God. He pointed out that from the beginning God made us “male and female” (Matthew 19:4). Jesus was quoting from Genesis where we are told: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth’” (Genesis 1:28). God could have designed another way for us to reproduce and to express loving intimacy, but he chose to make us sexual beings.

Jesus also made it clear that the true intimacy and joy of this gift can be experienced only within a loving marriage. All sexual relationships outside of marriage are labeled as fornication, adultery or sexual immorality (Matthew 15:19). These limitations on sexual activity are intended to protect us, not deprive us of enjoyment.

We have a God-given responsibility to control any temptation that leads to lustful thoughts and/or immoral actions. Jesus 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 is one who looks with the intention of dwelling on sexual fantasies and turning them into more than thoughts.

To illustrate how strongly he felt about this, Jesus recommended drastic measures, “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! So far as possible, maintain control over your exposure to sexually explicit images. When situations come in which it is not possible to avoid lustful images, strive to maintain control over your thoughts. Christians have the help of the Holy Spirit in them to keep them from fornication and sin (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Maintaining sexual purity today is like running the Boston marathon in the opposite direction. Imagine the stares, laughter and ridicule that would occur if you tried to run the race this way. 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 and courage. May God bless you.

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