**HOOKING UP**

We live in an age when we are starting to need apps to do anything. We need some apps to find transport from one place to another. We need apps to find food, order food, deliver food, and rate food. We need apps to work, exercise, sleep, and even relax. Is it a surprise then that among some of the most popular apps are those dedicated to finding sexual partners? Now that it’s understood as a biological need, one only needs to swipe a finger and a tryst is populated on one’s schedule with all the customizable preferences, durations, and options.

Ironically with all the channels for sensuality available, trends are actually showing that premarital sexual experiences are either declining or being postponed to later ages, perhaps due to the ubiquity of technology. Regardless, these practices existing in the secular world should be of no surprise to us today, as Scripture states in Ephesians 4:17–19. But there are a growing number of people who ask whether the Bible really purports to be against premarital sexual experiences altogether.

As premarital sex has become an accepted way of life in most industrialized nations, and promoted as the norm in media, these ideas are sought to be rationalized and woven into the Christian community. But does the Bible change humanity or does humanity change the Bible? Furthermore, who has the courage (or, as some may say, the stupidity) to speak against premarital sex or other dominant social trends? The purpose of this lesson is exactly that, to study what the Bible says, what God says, about premarital sexual experiences.
Write out 1 Corinthians 7:1–9 from the translation of your choice. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
IN GEST

Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in 1 Corinthians 7:1–9. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

Why is premarital sexuality so prevalent?

How is the biblical standard of virginity different from the secular double standard?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/sex10-3

IS PREMARITAL SEX WRONG?

Youth pastors have these perennial conversations with their young adults. If they were made into a FAQ and then fed into a robot, it would be an Android Youth Pastor without the cool hair and guitar. These questions start off as, “What’s wrong with . . . ?” and “Where in the Bible does it say that you can’t . . . ?” One of the spiciest topics is premarital sex. “Where in the Bible does it say that you can’t have sex before marriage?” On the surface, there is no explicit command that says, “Get thou married before thou haveth any sex.” But taking a closer look will reveal that the Bible is clear. However, before we dive in, and rather than having presuppositions of a “[sigh] here we go with another what-the-Bible-says-we-can’t-do [eyeroll]” attitude, we must approach this holy topic with a “what-does-God-have-in-store-for-me?” assumption for a better understanding.

God’s creation of man and woman already imbues humanity with dignity, value, and worth. The fact that Christ has died for humanity further magnifies our value! Anything that degrades humanity is something that God is passionately against. As previously established, Genesis 2 records that the first couple was made for social interaction and exclusivity. The purest form of love and intimacy must have preconditions where permanence is assured for full vulnerability, exploration of the selves, and acceptance without risk of shame, fear, or rejection.

The problem with premarital sexual experiences is that the body is seen as a separate entity from the whole being of the individual. Two bodies come together for sheer physical pleasure and temporary hormonal satisfaction. This separation is in itself the degradation and even dehumanization of the body. The separated body is not different from an animal, an item of furniture, a machine, or an object. The biblical sexual experience requires the absence of risk, the promise of permanence, and mutual grounding for respect, commitment, and love. This is what marriage provides, as seen in the first matrimony in Genesis, later in Song of Solomon, and in many couples of Scripture.

The Bible is also clear about the value of virginity. In fact, many narratives would not make sense unless sexual purity were not highly regarded. Though there have been double standards for men and women in various societies, virginity for both males and females is prized. Deuteronomy 22:20, 21 comes the closest to an explicit prohibition of premarital relations where the result was capital punishment, if the situation was not resolved in marriage. Whether we should keep these covenant laws is another question, but clearly God saw the value of sexual purity.

First Corinthians 6:15, 16 condemns premarital sexual experiences involving prostitution. First Timothy 1:10, Hebrews 13:4, Ephesians 5:3, and 1 Thessalonians 4:3 reject adultery, fornication, and any other sexual experiences without biblical grounds. What is common in all these verses is an overarching theme that God is Creator, and under the new banner of Christ as our Redeemer, we look to Him for standards of sexual ethics.

Spirituality is not only relegated to the ephemeral in this world, but this impacts the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical worlds we inhabit. Seeing as some may have already compromised their state of sexual purity, it is God alone who can give purity, cleansing, sanctification, holiness, forgiveness, and spiritual chastity. Just as Jesus says in John 8:11, we look to Him for the power to “go and sin no more.”
THE CONS OF COHABITATION

Whereas in times past marriage was mandatory in most cultures, modernity has legitimized the arrangement of two people living together. This living together typically includes the physical intimacy previously afforded to married couples. Though different terms and phrases exist, the most official designation is cohabitation, where a couple lives together but refrains from a matrimonial covenant. Often hailed as an alternative, it promises financial efficiency as well as a trial-run period when partners can be put on in a fitting room and either chosen to be purchased or returned to the rack.

What is initially presented as a good idea often results in negative repercussions that often benefit one gender above another. Cohabitation as an alternative becomes a marriage substitution, where there is always an “out.” Should the couple get married, studies have shown, they have higher rates of divorce, emotional and social instability, and overall lower levels of happiness during marriage. There are also ramifications for children and extended family. And even if there were no observable negative repercussions, we need to look back to Scripture to see what it teaches.

To those born again in Christ, Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 6:18–20, sexual sins are against one’s own body. Since Christians have been bought by Christ’s blood, their sexual behavior reveals the value they place on Christ’s sacrifice and ministry for them. When it comes to cohabitation, there is no acknowledgment of God as Creator, Redeemer, or Lord over the individual, couple, or their bodies. It is an open license for promiscuity and ends up hurting, or “sin[ning] against his [or her] own body” (1 Cor. 6:18).

Some tout the benefits of cohabitation, where marriage can be entered with more information. But this argument and others like it accept unbiblical presuppositions and assumptions. Secular ideas glorify the sexual experience as secret knowledge that will unlock untold ecstasies. This knowledge is sought through more experience. But God intended that both parties in marriage were to experience their intimacy together, growing in their experience at the same time (Gen. 2:24). Cohabitation rejects this principle altogether.

Others take a more individualistic approach, stating that what people do in their private lives is their business and as long as they are Sabbath-keeping tithe returners, who are we to judge? In a sense, they are correct if we are talking about non-believers. But once we are talking about those in the community of Christ (not always necessarily those in the church), we need to agree on our collective identity, especially in light of Scripture, in light of what Jesus has saved us from, in light of the current working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and in light of our new identity as citizens of the New Jerusalem.

Rather than viewing sexual needs as a part of the individual’s whole, cohabitation differentiates and separates them. Emotional and spiritual fulfillment are separated from the physical and financial. True fulfillment comes through a wholistic perspective, where God blesses the individual, the husband and wife couple, their minds, bodies, and spiritual capacities—the whole package—through His sanctifying presence.
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What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Deuteronomy 22:20, 21
1 Corinthians 6:15–20
1 Timothy 1:10
Hebrews 13:4
Ephesians 5:1–5
1 Thessalonians 4:3–8
John 8:11

What other verses come to mind in connection with sex before marriage

Review your memorized verse from 1 Corinthians 7:1–9.
THE DIVINE OFFICIANT OF WEDDINGS

There are various functions and purposes to marriage, but protection against sin is a primary one. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:2 that both men and women are to have their spouses to avoid fornication. As Jesus is in the business of justifying, redeeming, cleansing, and sanctifying, He also uses marriage as a tool in this process. Along with the Sabbath, marriage is one of the two institutions we have from the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 2:24, 25 records the wedding ceremony that commenced the first marriage. It says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” Just as the man left his mother and father, it is assumed and understood that the woman would leave her mother and father. After all, the two do become one flesh. Jesus needs the two individuals to be in a safe zone, in a covenant-promise-kept state for true sanctification to occur. The two were not to experience shame in front of each other. This implies a secure relationship where they could be surrounded by unconditional love and acceptance. With these parameters, the two would be spiritually, physically, intellectually, and socially fulfilled. Even after sin, God would use these environmental parameters to teach and impart sanctifying principles and power to redeem humanity.

The fact that God Himself was present and officiated at the first wedding (Gen. 2:22–24) points to the importance that God places on marriages and wedding ceremonies. It’s not about the ceremony itself but the demarcation line that man and woman cross together at the threshold before God. Ironically, today’s wedding ceremonies have effectively excised God out, or merely made Him a formality. Rather than being vows to each other, the vows should be directed to God, asking Him to help enable their commitments. Rather than guests, the people attending the ceremony are witnesses to this vow. Rather than special musical items, the songs are musical offerings on the couple’s behalf.

As the song says, “With Jesus in the family, happy, happy home,” it is likewise “with Jesus in the wedding, happy, happy marriage”! Jesus is to be the Divine Officiant of the wedding, Orchestrator of the marriage, Conductor of the family, and Sealer of the couple. God indeed does seal both man and woman by His grace, not to eternal imprisonment with each other as some would scathingly joke, but in a relationship that has everlasting ramifications in not only protection from fornication but development of character and glory.
SEXUAL RESPONSIBILITY OF YOUNG CHRISTIANS

“The surrender of all our powers to God greatly simplifies the problem of life. It weakens and cuts short a thousand struggles with the passions of the natural heart.

“The young affections should be restrained until the period arrives when sufficient age and experience will make it honorable and safe to unfetter them.

“A little time spent in sowing your wild oats, dear young friends, will produce a crop that will embitter your whole life; an hour of thoughtlessness, once yielding to temptation, may turn the whole current of your life in the wrong direction. You can have but one youth; make that useful. When once you have passed over the ground, you can never return to rectify your mistakes. He who refuses to connect with God, and puts himself in the way of temptation will surely fall. God is testing every youth.

“Sensuality is the sin of the age. But the religion of Jesus Christ will hold the lines of control over every species or unlawful liberty: the moral powers will hold the lines of control over every thought, word, and action. Guile will not be found in the lips of the true Christian. Not an impure thought will be indulged in, not a word spoken that is approaching to sensuality, not an action that has the least appearance of evil.

“Do not see how close you can walk upon the brink of a precipice, and be safe. Avoid the first approach to danger. The soul’s interests cannot be trifled with. Your capital is your character. Cherish it as you would a golden treasure. Moral purity, self-respect, a strong power of resistance, must be firmly and constantly cherished.

“Every unholy passion must be kept under the control of sanctified reason through the grace abundantly bestowed of God in every emergency. But let no arrangement be made to create an emergency, let there be no voluntary act to place one where he will be assailed with temptation, or give the least occasion for others to think him guilty of indiscretion.

“As long as life shall last, there is need of guarding the affections and the passions with a firm purpose. There is inward corruption, there are outward temptations, and wherever the work of God shall be advanced, Satan plans so to arrange circumstances that temptation shall come with overpowering force upon the soul. Not one moment can we be secure only as we are relying upon God, the life hid with Christ in God.”

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Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What are the positive aspects of preserving sexual purity and virginity until marriage?

How has the church addressed premarital sexual activity?

Why is the decline of premarital sexual activity still not good news?

How is the individual’s spiritual development connected to his or her sexual behavior?

What counsel can we share with singles living in this sexually open world today?

How is virginity much more than the state of the body?

Why are there different standards of sexual purity for men and women?

How is “test-running” sexual relationships detrimental to couples?