

Christian Relationships

[3rd edition, May 2006]

This study is designed to deal practically and realistically with Godly, Christian relationships. It is in two parts:

Section A The Word of God governs all relationships Pages 1 to 30

The first section lays the foundation for all relationships in the Body of Christ: The Word of God governs all relationships: relationships between friends – friend to friend, and friends of the opposite sex; relationships between parents and child; etc.

Section B Sexual Relationships Pages 31 to 51

The second section focuses on sexual relationships. It confronts today's attitudes and behaviour with Biblical instruction and values as well as confronting misunderstandings and lies about sexuality.

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The basis for relationships

Lesson 1

Section A – The Word of God governs all relationships

Objectives: This first section lays the foundation for all relationships in the Body of Christ: The Word of God governs all relationships: relationships between friends – friend to friend, and friends of the opposite sex; relationships between parent and child; etc.

A. The importance of relationships

We need to understand what relationships are all about because the **Kingdom of God is based on relationships**:

1. A living, personal relationship with God.
2. Our relationship with those around us.

Note: The Kingdom of God is *not based on correct theology or how much we know, but on Who we know* – that is, it is based on our individual, personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

1. **Therefore, relationships are the central point of our lives.**

- a) **Good relationships** – open the path for communication and correct understanding of each other.
- b) **Bad relationships** – close the path for communication and understanding.
Can you think of problems that result from poor relationships between people?

.....

.....

.....

You might have written things like: divorce, murder, wars, arguments, fighting, domestic violence – that is, violence (beating, etc.) towards wife or children.

Note: If we, as Christians, are to be open and free in our relationships with each other and if we are to reach the world, we desperately need to understand God's ingredients for good relationships ... how to get along well with people ... and how to correct bad relationships – both in our own lives and in the lives of others.

2. **The world is full of people who cannot relate to each other in a friendly, loving manner. Therefore, anyone (whether a Christian or not) who cannot relate well to others is part of the problem!**

All of us (even people who sit in a Bible College classroom called by God to minister to His people) at times cannot get along with each other.

Read John 13:34-35

Now read 1 John 4:7-21

3. **Loving people we like is easy. Loving those who are nice to us is easy. What requires supernatural [= above the normal or natural] ability is to be able to love the *un*-lovely – those whom we find hard to love. THEREFORE, you need to make a quality decision to make good relationships a priority in your life.** It is a *choice* on your part. It is not something God just anoints you with and suddenly everyone you meet is wonderful. It is something you and I must work at.

Read Matthew 5:24 – First reconciliation, *then* worship which is acceptable to God.

B. The Bible teaches us about relationships

1. **The "Gospel" or "Good News" of the Kingdom of God.**

Read Luke 9:2

- a) **What is "the Kingdom of God"?**

First of all, we need to define the word "kingdom": A "kingdom" is a realm (a domain, or region) in which a ruler acts to carry out his will. The kingdom of God is not a geographical area, but a realm in which God is in control.

Remember, none of God's authority has ever been lost. *Adam* lost what God had given him to the devil ... *Jesus took back the authority that Adam lost.*

Therefore, the "good news of the kingdom of God" is that mankind is no longer subject to the one who steals, robs and destroys – the thief, murderer and liar of all times – the devil! Because King Jesus is here, a new type of life is open before us.

The kingdom begins with a separation of righteousness and unrighteousness.

- b) **What is the "Gospel" of the Kingdom of God?**

Read Luke 9:6

Jesus sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God, and they went ... preaching the "good news" everywhere.

What good news?

That the rulership of the world had just changed hands. That a new King rules – one whose motivation is a passionate love for mankind; one who never lies but is Truth itself; one who is compassionate, just and awesome in strength, majesty and power.

2. **What the Kingdom of God and King Jesus means for you and me.**

It means that its King, its standards, its values, its morals, etc., must become our way of living *everywhere, every day and every place*.

The kingdom of God means that you put Jesus first, you put Him last, and you put Him every place in-between! He must be obeyed always, everywhere, every day, *and in every situation and circumstance*.

Read Luke 6:46

Jesus is Lord ... of *all*. That means He is Lord of the earth, King of Kings ... and rules over you and me.

If we read the book of Acts, we see that people believed the message of the Kingdom of God and that the first thing they did was to be baptized – testimony that they were *dead to their old way of living*, and were now living – no longer for themselves anymore – but for another, Jesus Christ.

With that foundation – that is, the understanding that as Christians we have made Jesus Christ not only our Saviour, but also our Lord and King, that we have agreed to His rule in our lives, and therefore have abandoned all other values and ambitions, let us continue

3. **The basis for Christian relationships** – Romans chapters 12 - 16.

These chapters give specific instructions on what our attitudes must be towards authority, towards those who may look, think, or act differently from ourselves, and correct attitudes towards our friends.

Read Romans 12:1-3

a) **“Thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to” is PRIDE!**

Pride is trying to make others believe we are different to what we really are. Or, believing ourselves to be different to what we really are. It is having a wrong concept (picture) of yourself.

Examples: “I am more important than the next person”. “I am much better looking than they are”. “I am more spiritual than they are and of course, much more intelligent”. “My race, or my tribe, or my country, is better than that person's”.

Note: These are all comparative things and are not the standard for behaviour and conduct that God sets.

Pride is the root cause of most problems in relationships.

b) **The standard for Christian behaviour.**

The "standard", or measure, of our behaviour as Christians, is *The Word of God*.

But the standard we often use when we look at people around us is not the Word of God, but *ourselves*! We measure others by comparing them to ourselves. Of course, we only see the good things in ourselves, our strong points, and we look at others and see their weaknesses. We measure their weaknesses against our strengths! This is wrong!!

c) **The answer to pride is humility.**

Humility – To refuse to defend yourself against what other people may think of you. Having nothing to prove to anyone. Therefore, if we live in humility, we will find it impossible to fight each other.

Note: The most accurate description of the person sitting next to you is what the Bible says of them.

Read Romans 13:10

d) **The Body of Christ – the Church.**

Read Romans 12:3-4

The Church has different parts, each part filled by a person with a gifting. Those "gifts" were *given*, not earned and not a product of being clever or looking beautiful.

We are not in competition with other races, sexes, nationalities ... we are not in competition at all. We are all "different". Look around you. See how many "different" people there are right here. God made us all different.

We need to *appreciate each other*. What if all flowers were the same, or all trees were the same. It would be very boring! God created an infinite variety of things.

e) **Loving without "hypocrisy".**

Romans 12:9 says, "Let love be without hypocrisy".

i) **What is "love"?**

Read John 15:12-13 – Love works for the good of the one loved.

A man named Josh McDowell defines love like this: "**Love is making the health, happiness and growth of another person as important to you as your own health, happiness and growth**".

Love demands that the success and well being of others is just as

important to us as our own success and well being.

Read Philippians 2:4

The question we need to ask ourselves is, "*What is the best I could hope for if it were me?*" and then we should act towards others accordingly.

- ii) **Hypocrisy** – means *false actions and motives*.

Loving without hypocrisy means we are not to *pretend* about being concerned for each other.

- f) **Good relationships require work.**

Good relationships with your friends, your neighbours, your husband or your wife, do not just "happen". God calls us to be committed to each other in love.

You have probably already decided that if you are to make the health, happiness and growth of the person you are married to (your children, next-door neighbours, friends, etc.) *as important to you as your own* health, happiness and growth, it is going to take a quality decision and lots of determination on your part.

Is it possible to truly make the success and well-being of others as important to you as your own success and well-being? Yes!

What does it take? A determined decision to do so, counting on God to strengthen you and another decision to *do* what God requires, no matter how difficult or uncomfortable it may be.

- g) **What does it mean to “give preference to each other”?**

Read Romans 12:10

“Preference” means *giving someone else first choice*. Giving the other person first place, giving them priority. Treating them as *valuable*. Their value is not what *we* may think of them, their value is what *God* says it is.

How do you know if you are “giving preference” to others?

Example: Imagine that somebody gave this class a delicious chocolate cake. It is a beautiful cake in every way ... there is just one small problem: it is a very small cake and there are only enough pieces for one half of the class! The other half will only have the pleasure of watching the first half eat! What is your reaction? Would you run to the front to make sure you were at the beginning of the line to get a piece? or would you “prefer your brother/sister”?

- i) **How to calculate “value”.**

Does one of you have a watch? Take your watch off ... and let the rest

of the class decide how much it is worth – what its "value" is.

(*Actually do this ... it is a good example.* You don't have to actually sell your watch to anyone, just see what they think it is worth.)

What price did you arrive at? Was it more, or less, than you paid for it originally?

The key factor in deciding something's value is – *how much someone is willing to pay for it!*

You may have a watch that you paid R200 for ... but if all anyone is willing to give you is R25 today, then for now the watch is only worth R25, because value is determined by *the price one person is willing to pay for something another person owns.*

How much was someone willing to pay for the person sitting next to you?

Their value is not according to what you and I may think they are worth; their value is determined by what God was willing to pay for them. What price did He pay? Yes! He gave His only Son, Jesus, for them. And, He would do so again today.

ii) **Well, let us take that one step further.**

Do people who are mentally retarded have the same value as you?
What about people who are missing an eye ... or a leg?

Yes! They are just as valuable as you or I.

iii) **We cannot minister to others without love.**

For you or I to serve without loving the people around us, makes us just like the Pharisees – experts in the written law, but who were not interested in anybody other than themselves, and had no compassion.

When we were saved, God made us a member of His family. This means that seated around us in church are not just friends, but *family*. Our attitudes towards them, and our relationships with them, must reflect the same caring, loving concern for them, as we would have for our own family members.

Example: I have three brothers. We do not see much of each other because we live far away from each other, but that does not change our relationship of being brother/sister. Why? Because we have the same parents. We have the same father and mother. It does not matter what my brothers do, if they change their names, if they move, or go to prison, *nothing changes the fact that they are my brothers.*

In the same way, those around you are part of the family of God, just as you are. And no matter what they are going through in their lives, you

are to maintain your loving concern for them.

NB: *This does not mean that if they are continually sinning that we accept or that we ignore their behaviour.* But it does mean that we still value them as a person Jesus died for.

h) **"Practising Hospitality"**.

Read Romans 12:13

If someone came and gave each of us R1000, we would probably think that person was wonderful and would remember him/her for a long, long time!

However, sharing time, food, encouragement and laughter is more important in building good relationships than one-time gifts of money.

Shared love and care, laughter, time spent together – builds, deepens and strengthens relationships.

i) **Bless, and never take revenge.**

Read Romans 12:4

Now read verses 17-19

We meet certain people in our lives that oppose us. The Bible says we will have "enemies" – people who are hostile towards us, wishing to do us harm.

For example: You will meet people who abuse your friendship, shopkeepers who do not give you full value for the money you are spending, people who borrow something and then never bring it back, etc. It can be as serious as someone hating you, or as trivial as a neighbour who puts things up in their garden, or builds onto their house, without ever considering what it looks like to you, living next door.

What does the Bible say our response should be to these people?

Read Luke 6:27-35

You need to accept the fact that even right now there are thousands and thousands of people on earth who do not like you – even though they have never met you! They do not like you because you have blue eyes ... or brown eyes; because you are fat ... or too thin; you are male ... or female; because you are French, or American, or Italian, or African, or Chinese, etc.

There are thousands and thousands of people on earth right now who do not like you, even though they have never met you ... because you are white or black or Indian!!

God has made provision for people like that in my life – people who do not like me although I have done nothing to them, people who exploit me or mistreat me – *I am to pray for them, bless them, feed them, do them good.*

Is that easy for me? Believe me, it is not! It is not *easy*, but it is *possible*.

Note: There was a man who wanted to completely destroy the early church. He killed many, many Christians. He dragged others out of their homes and threw them into prison without cause. His name was Saul ... Paul. He was not paid back evil for evil. God forgave Paul. Church leaders offered him the hand of fellowship. No one took revenge.

i) **Be at peace with all...**

Verse 18 says, "If possible so far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all".

You cannot *make* anyone like you but, as far as it is possible, you can make yourself "like-able".

How do you do this?

By being honest in what you do; by putting others first; by treating others as you yourself would wish to be treated; by not taking revenge; by blessing and being a blessing to others.

Note: When you refuse to take action against a person by not repaying evil for evil, this does not mean they get off free, never having to account for their actions. No! One day they will have to give an account to God. Make no mistake, the time will come when people who have hurt others, stolen from them, abused them, etc., will have to answer to God. That is what it means in verse 20, "heaping burning coals on his head".

ii) **Read Matthew 5:38-48.**

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

I pray that You will convict us where we have been wrong in our relationships with others – where we have not valued those around us. I ask that you show us, by Your Holy Spirit, just how valuable good relationships are, so that we will begin to treat others with care.

I pray that the people sitting here right now will treat their friendships as precious, and that their friendships might grow and widen to include many others. Convict each of us where we have treated others carelessly.

Let Your grace flow over each of us to help us overcome obstacles or misunderstandings. We thank You for the possibility of becoming sons of God and brothers and sisters to each other.

I pray that we will be willing to set aside our pride and increase in humility, that we might be the answer to the world's problems. Help us to determine to be at peace with all men as far as it depends upon us. Help us to love our parents, our wife, our husband, our children ... and to treat them gently and with respect, even as we ourselves want to be treated. In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

Homework:

1. For next week, read the following chapters (if possible in two different versions of the Bible – for example the New King James and the Amplified Bible, or the New International Version and the Living Bible, ... etc.). In the spaces below write which versions you read.

	<u>Version 1</u>	<u>Version 2</u>
Romans 12
Romans 13
Romans 14

2. What were the most convicting passages for *you personally*? That is, which verses showed you areas where you need to change?

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Living the commandments of Jesus

Lesson 2

A. The command to "love God"

Read 1 Peter 2:12 and Luke 10:25-28

Mankind was created to be in fellowship with his Creator, but the fall into sin brought separation and man lost his relationship with God – he lost God's friendship, communication, love and God's image.

Being created in "God's image" does not mean a *physical* likeness, but a *spiritual and moral* likeness. You will study this more fully when you do the Old Testament Survey books.

God is good, not like other gods that men worship – gods who are created, who are angry or uncaring. God is compassionate, kind, pure and in Him there is no sin. So, too, male and female were created good, pure and compassionate, without sin, not like men today – who lie, steal, cheat and are selfish, etc.

Through Jesus Christ, man's lost relationship with God can be restored. God's image can once again be seen in the earth, through people like you and me, who are good, have pure motives, do not lie or steal or cheat, but are compassionate and caring, etc.

1. Mankind became self-centred.

Man had walked in perfect unity with his wife, but as soon as sin entered, strife, competition and separation entered.

Immediately after sinning, when God called to Adam, *Adam shifted God's focus from himself by shifting the blame to Eve. Eve shifted God's focus from herself by shifting the blame to the serpent.*

Both man and woman denied any personal responsibility for what they had done. Adam actually ended up blaming God for his sin! ("This woman *You* gave me ...")

The results are seen in mankind today.

Read Galatians 5:19-21, Romans 6:5-6, John 17:20-23

2. How is God's image restored in us?

God's image is restored when we no longer live like the rest of the world. When we respond as He would respond – with love; when we refuse to lie; when there are no outbursts of anger from us; when we stick to our own wife or husband; etc.

B. The command to "love our neighbour"

Read Matthew 22:34-40, 1 John 4:20

The command to love God and to love our neighbour is what is known as a "Binary Truth" – that is, *two parts* linked together to form *one truth*.

Sometimes we try to separate the two great commands of Jesus. We love God ... but we do not love our neighbour as ourselves.

What does it mean to "love our neighbour"? Do you remember?

Yes – it means making the health, happiness and growth of the other person as important to you as your own health, happiness and growth. Love means that the success and well being of the other person, or persons, is just as important as our own success and well being.

How and what to change:

Read Colossians 3:1-15

What to take off:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

What to put on:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Read verses 16-17 (Still in Colossians 3)

C. God uses the storms of life to teach us

If I took a can of soft drink (Coca Cola or Fanta Orange), and covered up the outside so that you could not see what it was – *and* if I did not let you pour anything out of it, how would you find out what kind of soft drink it was?

Simple – *give the can a really hard shake! What comes out is what is inside.*

Therefore, how you and I react during the difficult times in our lives, when we are "shaken", is in fact an indication of what we are truly like.

A person can come to church every Sunday, sing, dance and praise God, *but* if when something goes wrong at home, they react in anger and beat their wife or beat their children ... they are not like Jesus Christ, no matter how well they sing or dance.

A mature and right response to difficulties:

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

Then read 2 Corinthians 6:3-10

When hard times come and we are under pressure, if we are mature, we will be resilient (able to bounce back, quick to recover, stand strong). If we still hold onto feelings of disappointment and anger over things that happened years ago, we are not mature.

The problem

Trouble
Perplexed (Puzzled)
Persecuted
Cast down

The response

Not Distressed
Not Full of despair
Not Forsaken
Not Destroyed

D. The correct response ...

1. To authority.

Read Hebrews 13:17 and 2 Peter 2:13-17

The devil is a rebel and rebellion is always directly related to his activities.

We are instructed to obey our leaders ... obviously this means leaders who are not leading us into sin or requiring that we sin. Authority can come in various forms – principals of Bible colleges, teachers, stop signs on the road for those driving cars, speed limits, taxes, etc.

Note: Obeying those in authority over me does not make me less valuable as a person because I submit to them. I do not lose any sleep at night wondering how God could have made me less important than my pastor ... because I understand that *authority is not "positional", it is "functional"*.

In other words, leaders are not "above" me in order of importance. Rather, they are people who have "laid down their lives" in order to see me grow and mature in Christ. Leaders are the ones to clear the way for those following behind. Like good shepherds, they are *in front* of the sheep, leading them to green pastures, protecting them from danger and in all things *setting the example by modelling Christ*.

When I look at their lifestyle, it should give me a picture of what Jesus is like – loving and good, totally moral, trustworthy, honourable in all things, true, etc. This is why being in leadership is such a big responsibility.

2. To those we are married to.

To esteem them (respect, honour them) according to their actual value as a person.

What is their value? They are someone God paid an incredible price for. They are precious!

3. To our parents, family and friends.

To honour and respect them, to model Godly conduct, to love, support and nourish them. We are not to abuse their friendship, pretending to care about them when in fact our motives are selfish. **Example:** Being friendly to someone because you want to borrow some money.

4. The correct response to God.

Our first priority is God.

IMPORTANT: Many times Christians are dishonest in their motives when it comes to their individual relationship with God.

Many times we do not realize that part of our normal Christian life is to overcome difficulties, live with problems, cope with financial stress, etc., and that during these times God is able to *support us through the hardships*. Instead, we want Him to *eliminate* all pressures so that we can live a trouble-free, tranquil life of ease.

Read Romans 8:35-39

Some people encourage me to *do* better by *trying harder*.
Others instruct me to *be* better by *doing more*.
Still others suggest I would *grow* more if I *learn* more.

But there are a few who inspire me because in them I see the King of inner change of character. That excites and inspires me with the possibility that I, too, can change.

Read Ephesians 4:25-32

Far too many Christians are not honest about their lives. Too often people are seen with their Bibles, or at church, singing and praising God ... but with little evidence of change in their daily lives.

Your lifestyle shows what your priorities are and what in truth is important in your life. You can come to church five times a week, be an elder, lead the music team, etc. ... **BUT** if you live by looking after yourself first, lie when telling the truth would get you into trouble, have sex with someone you are not married to, steal from your employer, etc., etc., ... it will be questionable whether you are truly saved, since you are not showing Godly character.

Read Matthew 7:15-20

E. The pathway to true change

The pathway to change is far more often talked about than actually put into practice. It is far easier to change our behaviour than to change who we really are inside.

If you are a Christian who is eager to really change, you need to make a choice to live life *honestly*. And that means beginning by being totally honest with God. God delights in your honest, intimate fellowship with Him – when you have open, truthful, detailed,

in-depth conversations with Him. *This* is called "prayer".

It is in this kind of true, open relationship that He can touch you with transforming power to change your life. The Holy Spirit is able to penetrate your soul with a ruthless exposure of what you are really like. He is able to spot exactly those deep inner thoughts and attitudes of your heart ... and convict you of sin ... then to comfort, encourage and urge you on.

It is during those times of honest intimacy that you will catch a glimpse of the reality of God and His majesty, holiness, and His love for you.

"When people respond to Christ, they do not just embrace a philosophy of life. They establish a unique, personal relationship with their Creator".

Josh McDowell

Teacher's notes

1. The answers to the blanks on page 11 (Colossians 3:5-15):

Put off:

1. Immorality
2. Passion (sexual lust)
3. Evil Desire
4. Greed
5. Anger
6. Wrath
7. Malice
8. Slander
9. Abusive Language
10. Lies

Put on:

1. Compassion
2. Kindness
3. Humility
4. Gentleness
5. Patience
6. Bearing with one another
7. Forgiveness
8. Love
9. Peace
10. Thankfulness

2. The command to love each other is also found in John 13:34.

Understanding yourself

Lesson 3

Before we are able to relate well to anyone else, we have to know who *we are* – honestly and realistically, and to accept ourselves.

Remember, Jesus said we are to love God and love our neighbours *as ourselves*. Therefore it is important that we have an accurate self-image.

A. What is "self-image"?

Have you ever had a picture taken of yourself?

Have you ever had a picture taken of yourself where you looked very nice indeed?

Have you ever had a picture taken where you did not look nice at all?

If you had both those pictures – the one where you looked very good and the one where you looked just awful, which one would you show to the people around you? Of course, it would be the best one, isn't that right?

Just like those photographs, each of us carries a picture of ourselves – a picture which is much more important than any taken with a camera. It is the mental picture we have of ourselves – that is, what we really think or believe about ourselves.

We wouldn't mind at all if the picture the camera took of us where we really look good was shown around so that others could see – and perhaps we wouldn't mind too much if some people saw the one where we looked terrible. *But, a lot of us would be very embarrassed if our hearts opened up and others could see just what we look like in there!*

What if someone recorded on film everything you have thought this week and then showed it to everyone in church? Well, I don't know about you, but I know I would be very embarrassed. I don't think I would attend that film show!

Read Proverbs 23:7

We tend to act in harmony with our mental self-picture. If we do not like the kind of person we are, we think no one else likes us either. How we feel about ourselves will influence our social life, our job performance – all our relationships with others.

B. How did we get our self-image?

1. **Hereditary** – That is, our genetic make up – things like physical appearance, colour, height, etc.
2. **From our home environment** – If our parents or our grandparents continually said that we were stupid; by age 5 or 6 we believed them and acted as if it were true. If we believed we were stupid, our marks at school probably reflected that opinion, *even if in fact we were quite intelligent!*

Children not only *look* like their parents, they *act* like them too! Children learn, not

only by what they hear, *but by what they see*.

Read Luke 6:43-44. The power to grow fruit comes from the root system.

We pass on our attitudes, likes and dislikes, traditions, culture, etc., to our children. Whether those attitudes are right or wrong, godly or ungodly, moral or immoral, children learn from what they see their parents doing.

If our parents or grandparents were governed by tradition, we will be too. If our parents hated all Chinese people, we grew up hating them too, even though we may not have known any Chinese people personally.

If parents are always complaining about something ... most likely their children will too.

If parents always worry ... most likely their children will too.

If parents take out their anger by hitting others ... most likely their children will too.

If parents are Satan worshippers ... most likely their children will be too.

3. From our friends and peers.

If our friends and peers (people of influence of same/similar age) also believed we were stupid and treated us as if we were, it would reinforce our poor opinion of ourselves.

4. From others we see as important.

These could be our teachers, uncles or aunts, older brothers and sisters, etc.

Can you see how important it is for a child to have parents, teachers, etc., who encourage them, love them unconditionally and allow them to learn to do things without any fear of ridicule or disapproval if they fail?

C. How to change

1. We try picking fruit.

"I am a Christian ... but why am I always fighting with others, why am I always angry, or sad, why do I always lie, steal, etc.?"

In order to change, I have to get rid of the fruit ... so I will climb a ladder and try to pick it off. I will *try* not to worry (pick that piece of fruit), *try* not to lie (another piece of fruit), *try* not to think of all the good-looking boys/girls (another piece of fruit) ...

But I cannot "pick the fruit" fast enough! Just as I pull one piece of fruit off, more grow on the other branches. The tree just keeps on producing more fruit. What is the answer?

2. Chop the tree down!

The only way to stop the tree from growing bad fruit is to destroy the root system.

On the third day of creation, the Lord established a physical and spiritual law that is critically important to understand. He ordered that trees would only bear fruit "after their own kind". Genesis 1:11-12.

Read Matthew 7:17-20

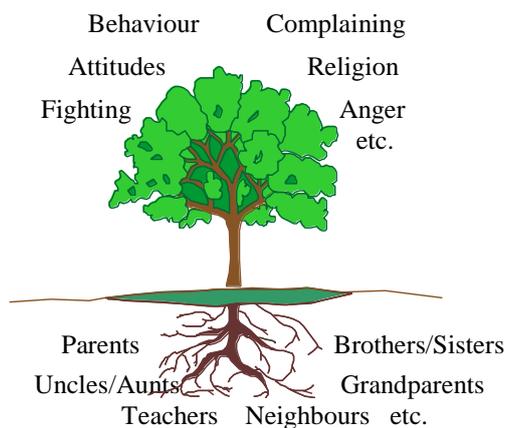
Chopping the tree down is the ONLY way!

Paul said to the Philippians that to know Christ, he had to give up *everything* that he was. When he understood the righteousness of Jesus, he counted *everything* that he had valued in life as rubbish.

The Bible says we are "grafted" into God's divine nature. When we come to the cross of Jesus Christ, we lay down our old lives and pick up a new life. And we cannot pick up the new if we are still hanging onto the old.

We find our true selves only when we throw our old selves on God. When we throw away our personal mental pictures of who we think we are ... and take on the understanding that as living sacrifices, "we are not our own". 1 Corinthians 6:20.

a)



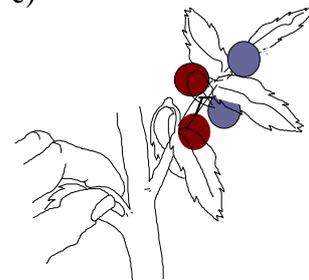
Read Galatians 5:19, 22-24

b)



Chop the tree down!

c)



God's Nature and Character

Jesus said "I am the vine, you are the branches".

Read John 15:1-8

Christians have a new Father, and are called to be like Him: whether we are short, fat, tall, black, brown, white, rich, poor, male or female.

Read Romans 12:1-2

A "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1-2) has no rights. No right to decide for itself, no right to self-centred living.

The "pattern of this world" is quite simply the values (what your culture and

society think is important), and practices (ways of living) that are contrary to the Word of God.

How real is Romans 12:1-2 to you?

Let us take as an example; your children ... consider them for a moment. Is how you treat them the way you would want to be treated? The things you do with them ... is that what you would *like* to have someone do to you?

Notice, I did not say, "Is that what *happened* to you when you were a child", but "is that what you would *like* to happen to you"?

Sometimes we do things in our culture, or in our social customs, that are painful and cruel ... not because they are right, certainly not because the Bible says we should, but only because it is tradition. We had those things done to us when we were young and so now we do them to our children.

But, if you have died with Christ and are no longer ruled by the world's system and values, why do you still submit yourself to its traditions and customs?

D. Let us end this lesson by starting at the beginning

Why did God create you?

According to Genesis 1:26, God created man in His image and likeness to have dominion over all creation on His behalf.

This means that man exists to show what God is like, as His representative or agent.

Example: One day a little boy asked his mother for a piece of paper and a pencil because he wanted to draw a picture. His mother gave him the paper and pencil and then asked him what he was drawing. The little boy replied that he was drawing a picture of God. "But you cannot draw a picture of God, my son", said his mother. "No one knows what God looks like!" "Well, they will when I finish my picture!" the little boy replied.

How will the world know what God is like?

By looking at the "picture" of Jesus they see in you.

Read John 1:18

Jesus has shown us who God is – what He is like, His character and His way of dealing with mankind. He has shown us God's compassion, love and understanding.

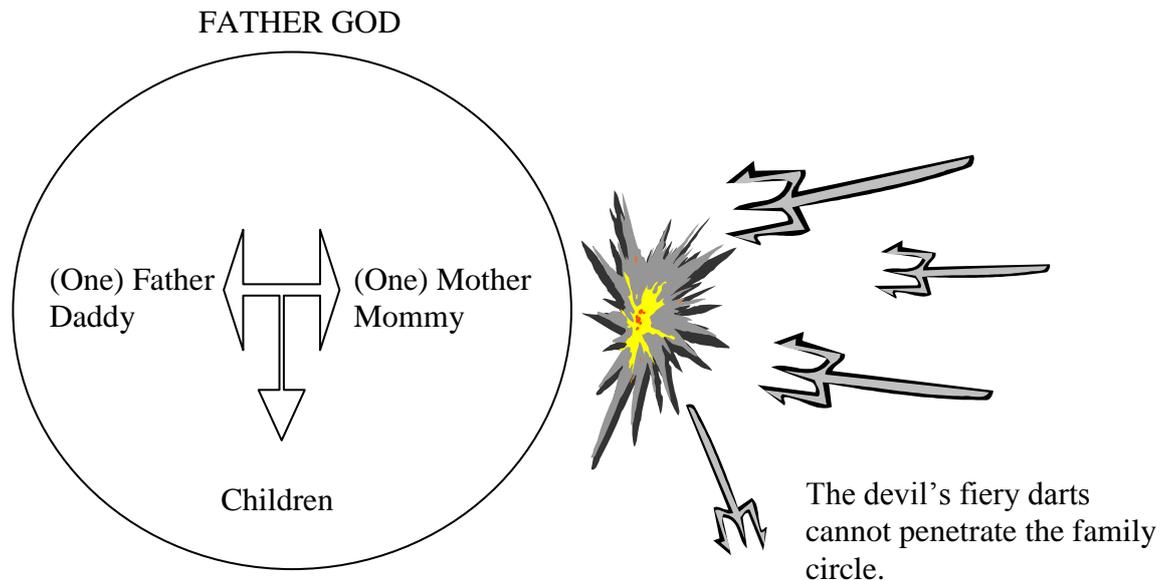
Jesus now lives in us. And when those who do not know Him watch us and see how we live, how we treat those around us with compassion, love and understanding ... they see what He is like.

Family relationships

Lesson 4

A. The family – God's protective circle

Look at the diagram below. God's ideal family provides love, protection, security and value to each person's life.



The Family Circle

Daddy loves God and Daddy loves Mommy Daddy is committed to Mommy. Mommy loves God and Mommy loves Daddy too and is committed to Daddy. **And both Daddy and Mommy are committed to the children.**

"**Committed**" means bound together, pledged to another, accepting responsibility for, fully promised to.

Within this protective environment there is constant care for one another, constant concern for each other, constant acceptance of each other, constant love unconditionally!

There is constant guidance and direction, constant protection, constant discipline – as parents exercise self-control and model Godly values.

This produces correct personality development in the children – correct priorities, right values, right direction and right relationships.

B. There is one reason for leaving the family

That is, leaving the family authority structure. (Children still leave home to attend school, university, etc.)

Read Genesis 2:24 – For "this reason" – which is to get married.

"Leave" = abandon, depart, forsake, go away, set out, drop, give up, stop, leave behind.

1. Leave what behind?

They leave the parental authority of their father and mother.

When you marry, you *leave* your father and mother ... and your father and mother *allow you to leave*. This does not mean a couple has to move away to another town or village, but it does mean that the parental authority structure no longer applies.

That is, a young person's parents and parents-in-law do not have *the authority to require anything further from either child*. When a person marries, their parents no longer hold a legitimate position of authority in their lives.

The responsibility of parenting is to coach, educate and prepare the children God has entrusted to them – so that they become good citizens of the Kingdom of God. If parents insist on keeping grown children dependant on them, they crush their maturity and stop them from becoming all that God destined them to be.

2. Mature children "leave" to "cleave".

"Cleave" = cling, attach securely, to be devoted to.

Parents should point their children to their Heavenly Father, so that He becomes their source, security, protector and provider – their all in all.

Parents must understand that God has given them custody of their children – that is, guardianship; made them trustees of their children ... but at the end of the day, they are His – He is their Father, and we must always point them to Him.

Young people who have no personal relationship with God, and who leave home, will "cleave" to something or someone ... alcohol, drugs or some other person.

Godly parenting prepares children to face the challenges in the world by allowing them to make mistakes without ridicule or loss of value as a person, and by pointing each child to God and encouraging them to become strong in the Lord, full of character and integrity.

C. Ways in which the devil enters the family circle

1. Failure of the parents to encourage and support each child.

The two factors that are essential to a happy home are:

- a) A sense that each person is valued and enjoyed for who they are rather than what they do.
- b) The opportunity for each person to develop individually.

This means that the "boundaries" (rules or limits) which are set by the parents, provide safety and privacy; and that within these boundaries each person is free to develop their own likes, dislikes, etc.

There are some limits, which have to do with life and death, where parents have to decide what is best for their children.

However, there are other issues, which are just issues of preference, or issues of accuracy, and in these areas children need to learn by trying and occasionally making mistakes.

If this balance between the pull of governing and the freedom of individuality is not present, children suffer because they are not adequately equipped to cope with the challenges of the world in which we live and to respond in Godly ways to the problems and temptations of the 21st Century.

2. **Failure of parents to love and support each other.**

In Genesis 1:27, we read that God created them "male" and "female" and in verse 31 we read that God saw what He had made and behold, it was "very good".

It does not take much understanding therefore to see that God *intentionally* made two distinct types of people – male and female – and that *both male and female are "very good"*.

The point I am trying to make is that all efforts to change males into thinking and responding to situations the way women would, is as futile as trying to make women react and think the same way men do.

Their difference is not a problem! God said the difference is "very good!"!

a) **The needs of men.**

The greatest need for a man is to be ***trusted***. Men are motivated when they feel that those around them, especially their wife, *trust them*.

Another thing that is important to a man is to be ***appreciated***. He needs to know that his hard work, provision and care are really and truly appreciated.

And, he also needs to be ***accepted*** for who he is. One of the most common complaints men have is that women are always trying to change them (their behaviour).

b) **The needs of women.**

The primary need for a woman is to know and feel that she is ***cherished (precious, valued, a treasure)***.

When a woman feels valued and respected, she is secure and has more to give. It is easier to *trust* a man who is caring; a man who treats her as precious.

She also needs ***to be understood*** – again, this is *unconditional acceptance*.

Most men have no idea how important it is to a woman to feel ***supported by someone who cares***.

What is the most common complaint women have? That men never listen!

(By the way, a man *thinks* he has listened when he can repeat what she has said. Women, however, define listening by *how well he understands her feelings.*)

In marriage, when the husband and wife do not respond by meeting each other's primary needs, the result is that each of them begins to feel unappreciated, unloved, mistrusted, etc. Selfishness, protective behaviour and withdrawal from total commitment will follow.

The family circle therefore, rather than being a healthy model of love and acceptance, becomes one of distrust and self-centredness.

3. Divorce.

Another, and more obvious, way the devil has an opportunity to enter the family is when parents divorce.

Besides the traumatic emotions which are involved, it is important that you understand that no matter what the cause or which parent is more to blame, each child believes that somehow *they* have caused the problem and are the reason their mother and father are no longer together.

This feeling of somehow being to blame creates an unbelievable sense of guilt and anxiety in the child. The result is a deep sense of loss, shame, insecurity and mistrust.

4. Rebellion.

Another way the devil destroys God's plan for the family is when there is unchecked, undisciplined rebellion in the members of the family – either in unrepentant sin in the parents, or undisciplined behaviour in the children.

Read Proverbs 20:11, 13:24

Read Hebrews 12:4-11

Relationships with the opposite sex

Lesson 5

As potential leaders of churches, you need to develop an understanding about sex that is realistic, that factually deals with the sexual pressures and the lies about sex which people face every day, and that completely agrees with Biblical instruction.

Much modern sex education being taught in schools *increases* the sexual pressure on young people. They learn *what* to do, but not how to decide when, where, with whom and under what circumstances God approves sex.

Most churches are not talking about sex. But silence does not protect anyone, especially not young people. It only makes them more vulnerable to the teaching of "modern 21st Century sex education" being taught by the world.

Talking frankly and openly about sex is not a sin. It does not encourage or condone sexual behaviour, but it does give a Biblical perspective of sex and the meaning of love and commitment.

The church often preaches "No sex" instead of teaching it. Teaching implies interaction, with students not only listening but understanding, asking questions, etc.

The importance of teaching is to help young people (and older ones too) *how to decide what to do*, by providing Biblical guidance from Scripture. Talking about the consequences of sex outside of marriage helps people understand that God does not arbitrarily (for no reason) say things are wrong. God says they are wrong for a reason!

Some churches believe that all sex is sinful, because they fail to understand God-given attraction and love, *and because they refuse to deal with and confront lust*. The difference between lust and love is that lust always seeks to *get*, to receive and to have its needs or wants met by another. Love, however, always seeks to *give*, for the benefit of the other person. (John 3:16 – for God so loved ... He *gave* ...)

A. The importance of understanding correct "opposite sex" relationships

The biggest emotional impact in your life, other than your relationship with God, comes from (or will come from) your relationships with the opposite sex.

Every person, including every person in this classroom, has experienced the emotional benefit, or the emotional pain, from someone of the opposite gender – their approval and encouragement, or their disappointment, ridicule, etc. You need to know how to walk in wisdom and in love, to assure you the best chance of not being hurt – and of not hurting anyone else.

Immorality is everywhere around the world. But why should the devil be so interested in sexuality?

The answer to that question is that sex is a *spiritual* event. God never intended sex to be outside the protection of the Holy Spirit.

1. Rules do not keep males and females from meeting.

Males and females will spend time together, either openly ... or secretly. Leaders who believe they can make enough rules to keep young men and women apart are deceived. Church leaders can be as creative in making rules as it is possible to be – there is no way to stop males and females seeking each other's company.

But, there is a manner in which they can meet openly and correctly, with respect – enjoying nothing more than good fellowship. In some cases these friendships may even result in marriage.

2. Are Christians setting an example in this area?

No – they are not – although they should be!

Christians far too often accept the standards their culture sets when it comes to sexuality and morality (that means integrity or what is morally right). Yet Christians should be the ones setting the example in both these areas.

Many Christians believe that all sex is evil, although God Himself created the male body and female body with distinct physical differences, gave man and woman the instruction to "go forth and multiply", and said that this was "good".

Many other Christians believe that *sexual lust* is normal, despite the clear direction in the Bible, that lust is *never* acceptable to God. Matthew 5:28; Romans 13:14.

Many times people in the church have the idea that if a person is going to serve God, he or she must completely ignore the opposite sex, or must suppress all sexuality.

Therefore, if we – as potential Christian leaders – do not know how to relate to the opposite sex ourselves, and do not know how to give sound Biblical advice to others, we are not ready to minister ... because the area of sex is the biggest problem area in the world today.

B. What the Bible says about "opposite sex" friendships

Read 1 Timothy 5:1-2

We are to:

1. Relate to an older man with the respect we would have if he were our father.
2. Relate to *the younger men as if they were our brothers.*
3. Relate to an older woman as if she were our mother.
4. Relate to *the younger women in the same manner as if they were our sisters.*

Note: Therefore, for anyone who is wondering what sort of behaviour is acceptable ... for example, "Is it alright to do this"? (whatever "this" might be). You need to answer these questions:

1. "Would you behave like that if she was your sister?" / "Would you act like that with your brother?"
2. And, even more importantly, would that conduct be acceptable to God? Would you still act like that if Jesus were physically right beside you?

You need to examine your motives.

"Motive" = the reason behind your actions, your intention or goal.

Most questions about what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour between men and women can be easily answered if each person involved has the ability to be honest with themselves.

That is, what *honestly* is the reason for wanting to be friends with this particular boy or girl, man or woman?

C. You need to give up your "right" to get married

This is difficult to do if you do not have a good understanding of God's character.

God created marriage! He created sex! And He intended marriage and sex to be good!

But, Christians do not have "rights" because they died to themselves when they came to the Cross of Christ. All "rights", all ambitions, all possessions, everything was given to Christ ... or should have been.

That is what Jesus meant when He said, "unless a man deny himself and take up his cross, he cannot follow Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has *lost his life for My sake shall find it*". Matthew 10:38-39.

This does not mean that you will never marry. Almost everyone, if not married already, will be married some day. *But, no one has the "right" to demand a husband or wife from God.*

1. How to give up the "right" to marry.

Easy: Go to God in prayer, tell Him you trust Him with your future, and mean it.

Note: Giving up your "right" to get married frees you from being preoccupied with finding the correct person. Many times young people spend their day thinking, "Oh – is that the one?" Or when they meet someone new, they think "Oh ... maybe it's her!" Or ... "is it this one ... oh, maybe that one!"

Putting your future in God's hands frees you from the driving force of continually wondering and thinking about marriage and sex.

2. If you do not give up your "rights" to marriage and sex, the opposite happens. You are continually tormented with, "I must find a wife", "I need sex", etc.

D. A correct sexual outlook

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Ephesians 5:3-4; Romans 6:13

First of all, you must understand that sex is not a biological need.

In other words, you do not *have to have* sex to live. Sex is a pleasure of marriage and it is

a physical function of your body, but it is not a "need". You do not *have* to have it to live.

Air is a need

If there is no air to breathe, you will die.

Food is a need

If you do not have food, you will die.

Water is a need

If there is nothing to drink, you will die.

But sex is not a need!

If you do not have sex, you will *not* die. You will not get sick. You will not lose your mind, go blind, or any of the other lies you have been told.

Note: Sex is either a peaceful privilege and a pleasure of marriage OR a torment. Give up the right to it, and God gives peace.

E. Take your time and develop non-romantic friendships

Ideally, when marriage does happen, it should be as a result of a non-romantic, non-sexual friendship. Many people marry somebody they do not really know because their relationship has never been a relaxed friendship.

Again, do not spend all your time looking for a possible wife or husband.

You will become a well-balanced individual by developing good non-romantic relationships and good friends.

F. Make a decision to please God in everything you do

Maybe this point should not even be mentioned, but it is amazing how many Christians want to please God in their jobs, their homes or their school, etc., but think that God is not interested in their sex life and that they do not have to try to please Him there.

Christians want to go to the "uttermost parts of the earth" for God – to Brazil, or China, or Pakistan, or Iceland, etc., but then God allows a test to come their way – someone with nice eyes and a pretty face, or good looks and a great personality come along, and in thirty seconds they forget everything they have ever wanted to do for God!

G. It goes without saying that no Christian marries a non-Christian

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14

1. Christians should be *friends* with people who do not know Christ, just as Jesus Himself was the "friend of sinners", but never consider *marrying* a non-Christian. A person throws away their ability to help the other person if they become romantically involved with them.

The most common objection to breaking off non-Christian relationships is, "*But no one understands them like I do*" or "*But I am trying to get them saved*".

The correct response to those statements is, "*If they believe you love them the way they are right now, what makes you think they will change*"?

2. Consider the *direction* in which each person is going.

The person who is not a Christian – where are they going to end up? In hell.
The person who *is* a Christian – where are they going to end up? In heaven.
Therefore, can they walk together? No!

H. Concentrate on your own maturity and relationship with God

A happy single person makes a happy married person.

Marriage is not the answer if you are not happy. If you are miserable now, you will only make someone else miserable if you marry him or her.

Remember, marriage is not about you and what you need – it is about the other person. Love prefers the other person above himself or herself.

Are you "free" to marry?

That is, are you free from these things?

1. **Sin** – lust, outbursts of anger, bitterness, hatred, fears, jealousy, etc.
2. **Emotional problems** – poor self-image, past hurts, etc. Ask yourself this question: "Why would God dump all my problems on another precious person?"
3. **Your character** – What is your character like? Are you honest? If you give your word on something, does that mean that you will *certainly* do it? Do those around you see you as being a responsible person and accountable for what you do? Are you really the even-tempered, self-controlled person you believe you are?

How quick are you to repay a debt? What is your financial situation like? The Bible says, "Owe no man anything but love" – are you going to involve another person in paying your bills?

In other words, are you, as a person ... worth marrying? (This is not a financial question, it is a *character* question.)

Again – a happy, fulfilled single person makes a happy, fulfilled married person.

Marriage does not fulfil a person. Marriage is about putting another person's happiness, needs and well being *before your own* happiness, needs, etc., are met.

4. **Determine not to marry because of need.**

Some people take 1 Corinthians 7:9 as a good reason to marry.

But this verse says, "*If they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn*".

Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit ... therefore it is available to every born-again believer. But self-control requires *effort*.

Marrying because of lack of self-control is really saying to the other person, "I want to marry you, dear, because I cannot control myself – I want sex". Is that a

loving reason to marry? No – it is totally selfish.

I. **What to do if you realize that you have started to love someone**

1. **Admit your true feelings to yourself.**

2. **Tell the Lord *immediately*.**

3. **Do what God says *right away*.**

If God says "No" – stop! If God says "No", and you take control of your thoughts and feelings, it is much easier on you than if you continue for the next six months.

4. **Make Jesus Lord of your emotions.**

Can a person control their emotions? Yes, of course they can. The Bible would not give us instruction about not hating, not holding onto hurts, living sexually pure, etc., if it was impossible for us to live like that.

a) **I am a slave** – my emotions and needs rule me ... anyone who can meet my needs will do.

OR

b) **I am a disciple** – I follow Jesus. Until He says "Yes" I will do nothing.

5. **Communicate how you feel to someone who is mature; someone you respect.**

Bring your feelings out into the open by speaking honestly to a person you respect.

Why? Because you need someone who is *objective*. Once romantically involved, you lose your ability to see and think clearly!

For example: There is a possibility that you can forget all about things like eating ... or doing your work ... etc. ... because all you can think about is "your love"!

Sometimes only a person who is objective, is able to judge the other person's true feelings for you – whether they like you as much as you think they do.

6. **Only when you have God's approval, and the agreement of someone you respect, should you communicate your feelings to the other person.**

Never, never, never, go to another person and say, "God has told me you are going to be my wife/husband".

Even if God has given you His approval, first allow the other person the opportunity of discovering what their feelings are for you ... and if they also believe they love you, allow them the time and respect to also check it with God. Remember, God is never going to *force* anyone to do anything – including marrying you if they don't want to!

Never "over-commit" your feelings. That is, if the other person responds by either saying or indicating that they also have positive feelings for you, do not instantly

propose marriage. Allow your relationship time to develop. Do not manipulate or try to control the other person.

J. When romantic attraction does not end in marriage

We need to be honestly aware of the dangers involved when romantic attraction is misdirected.

Romantic attraction involves both the heart, or inner feelings, and the *mouth*. That is, every time something "loving" is *said*, it is like a string between the two people.

What you say can be misunderstood. For example, "I like you" can be misunderstood to mean, "Oh! I must be really, really special to that man". "Will I see you tomorrow?" to someone who is falling in love with you can mean, "Seeing me tomorrow is the most important event in her life"!

The more you say, the more strings there are between you.

Note: Everything you say has meaning to someone who is emotionally interested in you. This is not sinful on their part, but it is potentially damaging if you first of all don't obey God immediately ... and if you are not caring in your attitude towards the other person.

Note: You should never "defraud" another person. We are going to look at this again in the next section, but basically it means you should never trick another person by pretending to return their affections when in fact you do not feel that way about them.

Finally, God never intended anyone to be hurt emotionally. No-one can guarantee there will never be hurts in this life, but if you act in a Godly, caring way, and always within His limits, there is more chance you will not be hurt and also that you will not hurt others.

What to do if you love someone who does not feel the same about you.

Broken hearts are a reality. There are times when one person loves another but the feeling is not returned.

First of all, if you follow what has been outlined earlier, this should never happen to you. That is, if immediately you recognize your feelings you come before God, receive His advice and do exactly what He says immediately, etc. (see page 28)

But, secondly, there is a path that leads to healing for broken hearts:

1. Make every effort to stay away from situations that put you in close contact with the person. If you are involved in ministry and they are part of that ministry, *change to something else*.
2. Take control of your thought life. *Bring every thought into obedience to Christ*. Do not allow yourself to fantasize about what life would have been like if they just loved you.

Note: God will not cancel all your emotions but, if you are obedient to Him, and

take control of your thoughts, He will give you peace.

3. Concentrate on your future. Spend your time and energy on your goals. Refuse to daydream or sit and do nothing. Get active.
4. Give yourself time to heal. Recovering from a broken heart is hard – and requires hard work, but you will get over it.

God has a wonderful future for you, full of wonderful surprises. No matter what you may be feeling right now; this is not the end of your life and happiness.

Teacher's notes

1. Sex is spiritual. **Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.**
2. Human sexuality is not the same as animal sexuality.
Animals: have sex, their response is automatic without thought, no love involved, reactionary.
Humans: have sex, controlled by thoughts and will, product of loving relationship, secure union.

3. A note to church leaders regarding people marrying:
Please note that this may not apply to you or to your church. Most churches respect the individual's free will to decide whom they will marry. However, some do not: In some churches, young men are "rewarded" for their good behaviour or loyalty by being given a talented young woman to marry or a young woman from a good home, or someone who is in the pastor's family, etc.

Please consider that the House of God, the church, is not a slave market. The decision who an individual marries is not within any leader's authority, it is God's. The people God has placed in a pastor's care do not belong to him. They are not his property to be used for his benefit. Every individual is someone Jesus died for, therefore for leaders to use them to "reward" the loyalty or achievements of another person, is completely wrong.

God created sex

Lesson 6

Section B – Sexual Relationships

Objectives:

1. To learn God's view of sexuality according to His Word, and to understand why He set the limits He did for sex – that is, confined it to within marriage.
2. To allow God to reveal to you the glory of virginity, the sacredness of sex and the covenant relationship of marriage. ("Sacredness" = reverence, holiness)
3. To assist you to communicate factually and accurately when answering questions or when advising others in matters related to sexuality.

A. Introduction

Some Christians have a problem seeing the word "God" and the word "sex" in the same sentence. However, the statement is true – God did create sex!

Biologically, the sex of a child – that is, whether it will be a boy or a girl, is determined at *the moment of conception*.

Whether the child will be male or female is determined *genetically* – that is, by the "genes", which are materials contained in the sex cells, through which the pattern of each child is determined – whether he or she will have their mother's eyes, or daddy's, how tall they will be, what colour, etc.

There are many lies about conception and the sex of a child, **but the truth is:**

1. First of all, whether the child is going to be a boy or a girl is determined at the very instant conception takes place (and this cannot be changed, no matter what the mother does or does not do).
2. And secondly, whether it will be a boy or a girl is determined by the *father's cell, not the mother's*. The gene, which determines whether the child will be a boy or a girl, is carried in the *male sperm – the man's sex cell*.

As a child grows up and is exposed to other children, adults, magazines and books, TV, etc., verbal (spoken) and non-verbal (observed) sex education takes place. Children learn by observing what goes on around them. They learn through what books tell them, or what TV programmes say.

Therefore, *it is important to present factual information to everyone you counsel or teach, children included, answering their questions as they arise*. Refusal to do this will only result in them seeking answers elsewhere, usually from their friends, or from people and places not equipped to provide a foundation of truth, health, or understanding of God-given sexuality.

Christian sex education, however, must also deal with more than behaviour, it must also teach how to make good decisions and how to solve problems using Biblical principles set out in the Word of God.

Each of you must also understand that in teaching others about human sexuality you can communicate your own standards, values and attitudes, instead of the truth of God's Word. Therefore, it is imperative that you prayerfully resolve any areas in your life that may not reflect God's image.

The reality of the problem – What would you reply?

1. Two members, a boy and a girl, of a local high school Student Christian Association visit you, their youth pastor. The girl is pregnant. They are not married and both are very upset. The reason for their emotional state is not so much because she is pregnant, what they cannot understand is *why* she is pregnant – because they both asked God for forgiveness and to keep her from getting pregnant every time they had sex. What would you say to them?
2. A young man comes to see you, his pastor, to get advice. The young man has been seeing a young lady on a fairly regular basis, but now she is under the impression they are getting married! She is looking at wedding dresses, talking to him about renting a flat, and her mother has begun to call him "son". He has no intention of marrying anyone until he gets established in business. How did she get the wrong idea? What should he do? The pastor asks the young man if he has ever told his friend that he loves her. He answers that yes, he has ... but he didn't mean they would get married! What would you advise him?

A study compared the sexual behaviour of young people with no church affiliation with high school young people who attend church regularly. There was no difference. I hope you are shocked, because there should be a tremendous difference!

Read Romans 13:13-14

When being a Christian makes no difference in our behaviour; when church leaders do not want to get involved because of their own lack of understanding or worse, their own sin, or unrepentant attitudes towards sex, we are facing a dilemma (problem) which can only be dealt with by realistically confronting today's sexual relativity with Biblical values.

B. God created two sexes

God has a pure, clean and good mind.

1. Man and woman were created by God.

Note: Woman was created because of God's plan for mankind; including His foreknowledge that man would sin and need a Saviour. His plan was settled from before the foundations of the world. 1 Peter 1:18-20.

When God created man, He created him in His own image. Remember first of all

that God is Spirit. God has characteristics that are both masculine and feminine – that is, God is tender and nurturing, but He can also be firm, disciplining His children, etc.

When God created woman, He took a specific area of what He had already created and formed woman. Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 5:2. United in a marriage relationship, man and woman complete each other.

2. **Male and female, created by God.**

Their bodies were thought up in God's mind and formed by His hands. Perhaps we need to think about Adam and Eve in the garden

Adam and Eve were naked. What did God say about that? God described their nakedness as glory. Man and woman were "not ashamed" and God did not consider their nakedness sin. God looked at what He had made and said that it was "very good".

Note: God created two sexes – male and female – not male, female and homosexual. Homosexuality is an emotional problem and a spiritual problem, but it is not a genetic problem.

Homosexuality is caused by a problem in *same sex* relationships. In other words, the young man (or young woman) did not develop a normal, healthy relationship with the parent of the *same sex*. Homosexuality is a sin. It is a sin that God can forgive, and homosexuals can be restored to normal, heterosexual relationships. (We will discuss this in more detail later.)

3. **To the student.**

You need to answer these questions, "Do you believe God has ever had a bad, or a dirty thought. Has He? Or does He have a good, pure, sinless mind?"

If He is holy and pure, then how do *you* feel about His creation? He made man and He made woman, He made them different from each other.

You may find that some of the physical differences between men and women are more comfortable to talk about than others. You need to approach this section of the course with an understanding that God is holy and pure. He could never think of something evil or bad.

We can rediscover God's original plan for mankind and take back what the devil has stolen by being determined to present God's truth in a factual, true manner. There is no need to be embarrassed or ashamed, and the more you teach this course, and the more you find out how people need the information and healing it contains, the more comfortable and professional you will be.

4. **God was not surprised by man and woman's sexuality.**

Read Genesis 1:28

Male and female bodies are not identical duplicates but were created specifically for mutual enjoyment and for having children. Male and female bodies are different

from each other – but they fit together perfectly! That was God's intention.

C. The Bible sets a standard for our behaviour

When I bought a Ford Sierra I needed the handbook from Ford Motor Company, to explain to me exactly how my car worked. I needed that specific information about that specific car, not a book about a Volkswagen Jetta, or one about a Defy refrigerator, or about a General Electric television. It was a car, and Ford Motors made it. I needed the right book from the manufacturer.

In the same way, we need to look at the Bible to see how you and I work. We should not seek advice from television, psychiatrists, friends or aunties. God made us. God knows how we work.

The devil cannot create; he only twists and distorts what God has created. And remember, the devil lies, perverting truth, destroying wherever he can. Today the devil tries to convince the church that sex is wicked, and that methods used by the secular world are effective in dealing with sexual pleasure and sexual problems.

The devil also lies by trying to convince us that sexual sin is "normal". That it really is not very serious to sin by having sex with someone you are not married to. But the Bible is clear – all sex outside of marriage is sin.

D. God made the attraction between a man and a woman

[Attraction = what you personally find interesting, pleasant looking or enjoyable]

1. Love ... or lust?

Attraction is not lust, but you will never understand lust until you understand what physical attraction is all about:

- a) To look at a woman = not sin
- b) To look at a woman with lust = sin

- a) To look at a woman, even to appreciate things about her – perhaps she is pretty or very smart, that is not sin.
- b) But, to look at the same woman, and begin to dream about how pretty she would look in your bed – that is sin.

- a) **Love:** The direction of love from yourself to the other person.
The focus of love is the other person.
Love desires to benefit the other person, even if it costs you.
- b) **Lust:** The direction of lust is from the other person to yourself.
The focus of lust is you.
Lust desires to benefit oneself at the expense of the other person.

Lust desires to receive self-gratification. Lust is a choice – to selfishly use someone, a desire to gratify your own wants or needs for your own benefit.

2. Attraction.

Attraction is what you personally find interesting, pleasant looking or enjoyable. For example, if we think about different foods – we might find that one person just loves to eat cake. Every time they see a cake they think of how delicious it would taste. But another person doesn't bother much with cake, what they really like is sausage rolls! Just to smell a sausage roll starts their mouth watering! Or, one person may like marmalade but another person cannot stand the taste of marmalade, what they enjoy is strawberry jam.

If we take these same types of personal likes and dislikes and change those very simple examples about cake or jam, and instead begin to think about what some people find tasteful in *people*, we find that one man might think it is very attractive for a lady to be nice and fat; but another man might think fat ladies are not nice at all, he likes ladies who are thin.

What impresses one person may not impress the next person at all. One woman might think men with big muscles are handsome, but another woman might think that is not important at all. She might like a man who is kind and gentle and she does not care at all whether he has big muscles or not. Some like tall some like short; quiet or loud; good at sports or not good at sports at all, etc. What is important and attractive to one may be totally unimportant to the next person.

a) Therefore, we can say that attraction works *individually*.

What you like may not be what another person likes.

b) Attraction is towards the "real person" inside.

What a person likes in another person is not just how they look physically. We are attracted to the other person's personality and character. This is very important in a relationship with someone of the opposite sex.

There are lots of potential problems ahead for those who "fall in love" with someone just because of their looks. What will happen to their "love" when the other person grows old and does not look like they do now?

c) Attraction works between people of the same sex.

Note: This does *not* refer to *homosexuality*.

It is possible to have close friends of the same sex, friends whom you love – that is, people you would lay down your life for, people whose happiness, success and well being are more important to you than your own.

Example: David and Jonathan – 1 Samuel 18:1.

d) Attraction is also found in the love between a man and woman.

The person you marry is obviously very attractive to you. There are things about them physically and things about their personality and character you

admire, respect and find beautiful.

One of the most important things to understand about love between two people of the opposite sex is that although the feeling of loving is not necessarily *started* by a decision or choice, *it can and must be directed by each individual's choice.*

In other words, you may find you are very attracted to someone but developing that attraction into love requires *your free will*. No one can just "fall in love" with another person. They love the other person because they *choose to*.

Example: When I got up this morning, I showered, brushed my teeth, got dressed, ate breakfast, packed up my books, walked to my car, opened the door, started the engine and drove to this college. When I arrived here, I turned the engine off, opened the door, got out, walked into this classroom by putting one foot in front of the other, opened the door, walked to the front ... and here I am.

Now, what would you think of me if instead of describing how I got here like I have just done, I said to you, "Oh! Oh my goodness! I don't know what happened! I just got out of bed and ... and ... suddenly here I am!! I don't remember getting dressed or eating breakfast ... How did I get here! All I remember is getting out of bed"!!

What would you say? You would probably say that there was something seriously wrong with me! You would not accept that getting out of bed somehow resulted in my arriving in this classroom ...

And yet that is exactly the type of thing we hear all the time from people who say that "All they did was just smile at that woman ... or that man ... and suddenly they ended up in bed!" It "just happened"! Men and women will even say that they did not want it to happen at all ... they never intended to end up having sex, it "just happened".

Well, *it never "just happens"!* **Except in cases of rape**, every person who ends up having sexual intercourse with someone they are not married to, arrived at that situation by *making choices – the wrong choices.*

e) **Therefore, attraction must be directed by:**

i) **God's truth** – That is, by firmly believing that when God says something is sin that settles it. You and I must decide to turn away from it immediately.

For example: "You shall not steal". Therefore it is not acceptable for you to believe that it might be all right to steal in some situations. You do not have the right to choose in which situations you will or will not steal. You are not to steal – period.

ii) **The Word of God** – You need to conduct your relationships in the manner the Bible tells you to, and it is specific about how you should relate to your brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Bible also says that our “yes” should mean yes, and our “no” should mean no. Therefore, no man or woman should ever say the words “I love you” unless that is true.

Gentlemen, if you say “I love you” to a young lady you are spending time with, she will expect the next words to come out of your mouth to be “Will you marry me?”

You should also never be guilty of saying “I love you” to another person because you want something from them. When a young man uses “I love you”, because he wants something from a young lady, what he wants is usually sex without commitment – that is, without marriage.

- iii) **Your will** – There are times when your attraction to another person of the opposite sex does not start out to be a conscious decision. However, whether that relationship progresses any further can and must be directed by your will. Just as you put your clothes on in the morning and end up fully dressed, so *choices* are made in order for you to “love” someone.

The above three points mean that if you should meet a man/woman you find yourself very attracted to – and that person is married, for example – your response should be to instantly take control of your thoughts and to stay away from situations where you would be together, to keep as far away from them as you possibly can and to tell your Heavenly Father exactly how you feel – He knows it already, but it helps to make sure *you* are aware that He knows.

And, ladies and gentlemen, should you ever find yourself attracted either romantically or sexually to the person you are counselling, you should immediately turn their case over to another leader in the church. The same applies if you should ever discern that the person you are counselling is attracted romantically or sexually to you. *Immediately* call in another counsellor to replace you. As soon as there are romantic feelings involved, a counsellor loses their effectiveness to be objective.

E. Be wise! Set limits for yourself *now!*

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12

Some things do not need rules or laws, because it would be just plain stupid to do them. For example, it is not “unlawful” to water your vegetable garden with petrol instead of water – but it is not “profitable” to do so. There is no law that says you cannot polish your shoes with peanut butter, or perhaps cement, but it is not “profitable” to do that. There are no laws about putting glue on your morning toast ... but it is not wise.

In the same way, we need to apply what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 6:12, to our relationships with the opposite gender (opposite sex). Some things are “not wise”. It is never wise to put yourself in the way of temptation. It is never wise to spend time alone with someone you love but are not married to.

F. The key to good relationships

Think about what you are going to do *before you do it!*

It is not easy to maintain God's standards of sexual purity in a "sexualised" world, but thinking about the following may help you:

1. Make sure you are always honest with yourself. Do not fool yourself; you (and everyone else) have the possibility of sinning, given the opportunity. If that were not true, the devil would never be able to tempt anyone with anything. We are all subject to sin – and you are no exception.
2. Think of what the consequences will be if you give in to temptation. No matter if you think no one would ever know, God knows, and He never accepts sin. All sin has consequences.

Many people believe that the only consequence of their sexual behaviour might be pregnancy. However, there are other results as well, for example sexually transmitted diseases, or “STD’s”.

Teacher’s notes

1. Answers to the problems mentioned on page 32:
 - a) Sex outside of marriage is sin. God’s forgiveness is based on repentance. Repentance means being sorry enough to *stop!* God forgives if we are sincere, but His forgiveness does not cancel out the consequences of our sin. Remember, David and Bathsheba sinned, David asked for and received forgiveness, but God still took their son – a New Testament picture that He will not allow us to benefit from the fruit of our sin.
 - b) First of all, every word is a string. The words "I love you" mean that I am willing to lay my life down for you. To say "I love you", and not mean it, is to tell a lie. God says lying is sin. Therefore, this young man has sinned. The most natural response for a young lady to make on being told she is loved is to assume he would want to marry her. He needs to go to the girl, her family and others, and openly ask for their forgiveness.
2. Man and woman are complete in marriage, but that does not mean that unmarried people are incomplete – “we are complete in Him”.

Human sexuality

Lesson 7

A. Introduction

Sexual intercourse between husband and wife is a beautiful gift – a wonderful, loving experience. It operates at every level: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

God knows that every experience is either in one kingdom or the other. It is either of light or darkness – of good or evil – of God or of Satan – and God has determined the limit within which this particular experience (sexual union) takes place – namely, within marriage and *nowhere else*.

Within marriage, sex should be good and enjoyable because God created it. Outside of marriage it can feel nice physically and even emotionally (although many times it does not, because of guilt, selfishness, etc.) but it can *never* be spiritually good!

Sex outside of marriage carries enormous potential for hurt – to you, the other person, and to God (Psalm 51). A fire in the stove or fireplace is good, but a fire in the living room is a disaster! Sex in the right place – within marriage – is wonderful, but outside of marriage it is not only dangerous, *it is forbidden by God*.

B. What if you are engaged to be married?

The limit that God sets for sex is marriage. Therefore, do not think that for you it is all right because you are *going* to get married.

Do not believe that because socially or culturally those who live around you believe it is not wrong for an engaged couple to have sex before they are married that this will in any way change God's view of sex outside of marriage being sin. You will not change His mind.

God has said it is not *ever* right outside of marriage. If you do not believe that, look at the warnings of the consequences.

Read Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Revelation 21:8

C. "Fornication"

Fornication is the same thing as sex outside of marriage. Fornication is sexual immorality, along with other sexual sins such as adultery.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, a seaport where immorality was a way of life. In his letter he wrote of the *dangerous sin* of believing that there were two kinds of sex – "serious sex", the kind with one's wife or husband, and "casual sex", which people there believed was only casual and did not really mean anything.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-20

Obviously, people who believe sex can sometimes just be "casual" are wrong!

D. What it means to “rule” our bodies

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27 that we should rule our bodies as well as our minds and emotions.

What does it mean to "rule"? It means to bring into Godly order.

1. Rule your thoughts and motives.

It is wrong to stir up within you or someone else desires that cannot be satisfied within God's limits. Continually being preoccupied with sex is wrong.

For example: It is wrong to secretly long for someone who is not your wife/husband, to be sexually aroused by thoughts of them, and then relieve that sexual desire by having sex with your wife/husband. It is wrong to believe that it is all right for a man to pursue sex until a woman says "stop". Each person is responsible for his or her own behaviour.

2. Fraud.

1 Thessalonians 4:6 says that we are not to "defraud" another person. It means we are not to take advantage of, or to manipulate someone else's emotions.

"Defraud" means to be dishonest – knowing that your intentions are not for a loving, lasting relationship, but allowing another person to believe there is hope, is wrong.

For example: To pay attention to someone because you want some advantage – maybe her father is the pastor of your church. Or to keep a young man "on a string" because you like the presents he gives you, or because there is no one else at the moment.

What should you do? Do nothing to encourage their feelings. Watch your words and your actions. Be friendly, but do not spend any more time in their company than necessary.

3. Pornography.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 7:5

The Hebrew word is "porniea" – which means "to view unlawfully".

Pornography robs intimacy – close, detailed knowledge. That is, you are unlawfully looking at what God designed and intended to be viewed by only the person's husband or wife.

4. Adultery.

Read James 4:4

Obviously there is more to adultery than a husband or wife having sex with someone else.

Adultery means "setting your affection on that which is not yours or that to which you do not belong".

5. **Masturbation.**

It is probably appropriate to deal with this subject here although it is not strictly "personal relationships" – however, it is a question that is asked time and time again.

Masturbation is a big word which describes the act of sexually arousing yourself by your own efforts, usually to the point of climax. Almost always, it carries feelings of guilt.

The Bible does not discuss masturbation – not because it is not important, but because the sexual roles of giving and receiving sexual pleasure and fulfilment are clearly outlined, as we have studied. Sexual pleasure is meant to be *given by you and received by another, given by another and received by you* (all within the context of marriage). Masturbation is self-centred.

Beating this temptation is no different from beating any other temptation.

Bring the problem before God honestly and openly. He is not going to condemn you, but will help you. Remember, self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible does not say that if you masturbate you are sinning, but you may be feeding a sexual appetite that, as it grows, you may find difficult to control.

E. **Homosexuality**

Homosexuality is the sexual relationship between two people of the same sex – two men, or two women. (Female homosexuality is usually called "Lesbianism".) The normal sexual relationship (male – female) is called "heterosexual".

There is not time in this course for us to learn all there is to know about homosexuality, and if this is a problem you personally face, please forgive the short space of time we are going to spend on it.

Everyone needs to be absolutely sure of two things: firstly that homosexuality is *a sin*, but not *the sin of all sins*. And secondly, that God hates the sin, but loves the sinner.

Every homosexual is a person with thoughts and feelings, who has the same grace, forgiveness and cleansing offered to them as anyone else has.

Nothing different is asked of the homosexual than is asked of the heterosexual – to avoid temptation, to be moral and pure and to abstain from all sex outside of marriage.

Homosexuality is a "same sex" problem. That is, the homosexual does not turn to another man for sexual fulfilment because they do not like members of the opposite sex. (Or a woman turn to another woman.)

They turn to their own because they have been *rejected* at some point in their lives by their own sex. What they desperately need is to be accepted, valued as individuals and

welcomed by others of their same gender. What every homosexual needs is the friendship and acceptance of other men (or women). What they usually receive is rejection.

1. **Why is homosexuality wrong?**

It is wrong because it is outside of God's limits.

What are God's limits? God's limits are that all sexual relationships are only within the covenant of marriage.

2. **The Bible makes it abundantly clear that homosexuality is a sin.**

Read Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:26-27

As with all sin, each of us always has a choice of whether to go God's way, or our own way. Therefore, no one is ever an innocent victim of homosexuality. The sin of homosexuality, as with all sin, is not the temptation, but in the act.

No one is born a homosexual and homosexuality is not a disease. Moral choices are available to everyone.

3. **Is there a "cure" for homosexuality?**

Yes! A man named Pete Gilbert puts it this way: "No more is asked of the homosexual than of the heterosexual (man-woman relationship) – avoid temptation and abstain from sex outside its proper context. The homosexual has the potential of establishing sexual security and identity initially with Jesus' understanding, love and acceptance, and ultimately with the Holy Spirit's power to change".

Their habits, thought patterns and lifestyles will have to change, battles will have to be fought and won. This takes time, but victory is assured.

Most homosexuals need wise counsel. They need to share their past, their fears, hurts, guilt and failures ... they need to be honest and real with themselves, with God and with others. All need the encouragement, friendship and support of other men (or women).

Many homosexuals, having made Jesus Lord of their lives, are now happily married to a member of the opposite sex, and find their sex life pleasurable and satisfying.

F. Important principles to understand

1. **Perhaps the least obvious result of sex outside marriage is the spiritual damage it does.** But, the damage *is very real*.

The Word of God says we "sin against our bodies" because we are "united" with our sexual partner without being married. In sexual intercourse, two people become one.

Sexual activity outside of God's limits produces a spiritual bondage – you give Satan the legal right, a stronghold, over an important part of your life. Sin removes God's protection. The results may be a stronghold of lust, or an obsession with sex, guilt, helplessness and the inability to pray.

Never think Satan will ignore an open door – because he will not. Sex is one of the areas the devil works in most powerfully and most effectively.

2. **God created sex for loving and giving, not lusting and getting.**

In other words, sex is an expression of the love, care and concern you have for the other person. Not a selfish right to demand pleasure.

3. **We damage our own conscience.**

It is easier to sin again; easier to have sex again.

4. **Sex outside of marriage destroys intimacy.**

"Intimacy" = emotionally close, personal, thorough familiarity.

There are some experiences in life that are "intimate".

For example: There is absolutely nothing wrong with taking a shower or bath but does that mean you would like to do so in the middle of a busy street? No, of course not!

Sexual knowledge of another person is the most intimate knowledge and experience possible for humans. God intended sexual intimacy to be shared only between husband and wife.

5. **Sex outside of marriage destroys trust.**

Fear and worry replace trust. This is especially true when a married couple has to spend time apart from each other for whatever reason – for example, if he travels on business; or she goes to visit her sister who lives in another town.

a) **For the wife.**

Perhaps before they were married, the man told his wife he "needed" sex because he was a man ... hmmm ... does he still "need" sex now that he is away on business?

He told her she was different from all the other ladies, she was "special, precious". If he has sex with someone else while he is away, is that lady also "special"?

How "precious" do you think his wife feels now? Do you remember what the most important aspect of a relationship is for a woman?

That is right! – to be "*cherished*"! To know she is important and loved and special.

b) **For the husband.**

Maybe he thought it did not really take a lot of persuading for his wife to agree to have sex before they were married ... now that he is away, will she be just as "easy" with another man?

Do you remember what the most important aspect of a relationship is for a man?

That's right! To be *trusted!*

Sex outside of marriage destroys trust.

6. **Sex outside of marriage creates guilt.**

Sexual sin is the most difficult sin to recover from.

Note: It is not difficult for God to forgive us, but it is very hard for the people involved to forgive each other and themselves.

7. **Sex outside of marriage creates fear.**

Guilt grows into fear – for example, where pregnancy results from pre-marital sex, there is often fear that the baby might not be normal, etc.

There is also the fear of comparison – "Am I as good a lover as the other person my husband/wife was with?" "Is my husband/wife comparing me to him/her?"

8. **Sex outside of marriage makes it easier to commit adultery after marriage.**

Sex before marriage hardens the conscience, and makes sex outside of marriage easier. It is easier to sin again.

G. The Word of God sets the absolute rules

The *Word of God* sets the absolute rules that govern our conduct and behaviour at all times, in every situation.

When God says something we know it is the truth. He never lies. He never deceives. He never pretends. Integrity (honour, righteousness, honesty and goodness) is the basis of His character.

Everyone who claims to be one of His children should also conduct himself or herself with integrity. What we speak should also be the truth, and how we live and behave should also be righteous.

It is essential that you understand, accept and adopt, God's attitude towards marriage and sex and that you reflect His image in everything you do.

Sexual relationship within marriage

Lesson 8

A. God is a God of covenant

Covenant is unfamiliar to people who live today, but an understanding of covenant is basic to our understanding of the Bible, and man's relationship with God.

The idea of covenant is not only found in the Bible. Other cultures used covenants as a basis for social relationships, between one nation and another, as a treaty, or between individuals as the expression of friendship. Covenants were used for business contracts, and even for the constitutions of countries.

Therefore, it is not surprising that God selected covenants to make clear the relationship He was seeking between Himself and His people.

A Biblical covenant is a clear statement of God's purposes and intentions, which are expressed in terms that bind God by solemn oath to perform what He has promised. Mankind may accept the terms of God's covenant or man can reject them – *but mankind cannot change the terms of God's covenants.*

B. Marriage is a covenant

The Bible presents marriage as an intimate relationship between male and female, which was instituted by God. ["instituted" = established, set up, brought into existence]

In other words, marriage was established, set up and brought into existence by God as an intimate, unique, special relationship between male and female.

Marriage is the first institution established by God and the only one established before the fall of mankind into sin.

Genesis 1:26-27 makes it clear that God intended humanity to have both male and female expression.

1. Woman is a "suitable" partner for man.

Eve was "suitable" because she also carried the image and likeness of God.

Bearing God's image allows mankind to relate to each other completely – emotionally, intellectually, spiritually and physically.

2. Woman is a "help" for man.

The Hebrew word "ezer", used for woman in Genesis 2:20, and translated as "helper", does not mean that Eve was inferior or subordinate.

The same word, "ezer", is used to speak of God as helper of His nation and of individuals. *God* is man's "ezer" or "helper" in all kinds of distress. (Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29; Psalm 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:19; 115:9-11; 121:1-2;

124:8; 146:5; Hosea 13:9)

We would hardly argue that God is inferior or subordinate to the person He is helping.

3. The Biblical view of marriage.

The Bible views marriage as an intimate union of two human beings – one male and the other female.

The purpose for marriage is not only to populate the earth, but also designed by God to meet the need of human beings for sharing and companionship and close friendship.

God created marriage so that man and woman would be committed through their lifetime to share every challenge and experience of life on earth.

4. The effects of the Fall.

The events of Genesis 3 show that the harmony which existed before sin was destroyed by mankind's decision to sin.

Three events are recorded following the Fall:

- a) Cain killed his brother Abel, Genesis 4:1-8. The special relationship of the first family was shattered by murder.
- b) Lamech married two women, Genesis 4:19-22. Marriage, intended to be a vital union between one man and one woman, was distorted by polygamy (having more than one wife).
- c) Lamech murdered a youth who injured him. Man violently and unjustifiably (Genesis 4:23-24) destroyed a human life, proclaiming his complete independence from God.

Each event illustrates (shows) the meaning of the death that struck humanity when mankind sinned.

The Old Testament indicates that polygamy, along with the practices of taking concubines (secondary wives not given full legal position), was practiced in Israel. However, the practice of polygamy is not approved of, or recognized as Godly, in Scripture.

The ideal of monogamy (one wife) shines through clearly in the record of creation and in all the prophets' description of the relationship between God and Israel – like a husband married to one wife.

Read Isaiah 54:5–6; Jeremiah 31:31-32

5. Marriage reflects the relationship between God and His people.

Therefore, faithfulness is demanded from both husband and wife.

The prophets compared turning from God to idols, to the sin of adultery (Jeremiah 3:9; Ezekiel 23:37).

The New Testament uses similar language. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, because their relationship is to reflect the spiritual union of Christians and Jesus.

When we hold God's attitude towards our husband or wife, our marriages can be free from the impact of sin and will show the world the pattern God intended.

C. Every covenant has a sign

A *"sign"* is the external evidence of an internal work. That is, it is an outward, visible proof that something has happened inside the person.

1. God's covenant with Noah.

Genesis 9:9-12, *"And God said, this is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you ... I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth".* **The sign: the rainbow.**

2. God's covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 17:9-11, *"And God said to Abraham, as for you, you shall therefore keep My covenant and every male among you shall be circumcised and it shall be a token or sign of the covenant between Me and you".* **The sign: circumcision.**

3. God's covenant with David.

Psalms 89:27-37, *"My covenant I will not violate ... his descendants shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful".* **The sign: the sun, moon and stars.**

4. God's new covenant with you and me.

Colossians 2:11, *"In Him (Jesus) you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, but in a (spiritual) circumcision ... when you were buried with Him in your baptism, in which you were also raised with Him (to a new life), through your faith".* **The sign: baptism.**

D. The marriage covenant

Read Deuteronomy 22:13-29

What if this was the penalty for sexual sin in your country today?

I would like to suggest to you that if the laws of your country and mine were the same as God's laws in the passage we have just read, there would probably be no sex before marriage, no immorality, no rape, no sexual sin and no sexually transmitted diseases! Do you agree?

1. Virginity.

Definition of the word "virgin" – Not yet used, penetrated or tried; innocent, undefiled; spotless; untouched; still in its natural or original state; pure, unused, uncharted, unspoiled.

When a young man and woman got married, *it was expected that they would both be virgins.*

There is some physical evidence of a woman's virginity when her hymen is penetrated during intercourse, since it *usually* (but not always), causes her to bleed slightly, but there is no *physical* evidence of a man's virginity.

However, God has no double standards. All fornication is sin.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Mark 7:21

It is not possible that God would consent to the glory of a virgin of Israel being made "one flesh" with a man guilty of what God calls an "abomination".

A young man is to act responsibly and honourably based on the integrity, honesty and goodness of his character, as a reflection of God's character.

The "tokens of virginity", Deuteronomy 22:14-17.

The word "token" means "evidence or proof".

It was the custom for the parents of the bride to provide the bed linen for the young couple. Her virginity was not only glorious to herself; it was glorious to her father and mother.

In God's commission to man to guide his family, to lead them well by demonstrating in his life what it means to be righteous, and to guard his family, came the responsibility to direct, protect and correct his children. Therefore, for children to have kept themselves sexually pure, was evidence that the parents had raised them well.

The proof, or "tokens", spoken of in Deuteronomy 22 would be the blood stains and seminal fluid on the bed linen caused from the young man and woman's first time of intimacy together. The only basis for breaking the marriage was for the man to claim that his wife had not been a virgin when they married.

If that accusation were made, the parents of the bride would bring out the bed linen and if the "evidence of virginity" was there, the man was accused of slandering (telling lies about) a virgin of Israel. He had to pay a heavy fine and he had to remain married to the woman and care for her for the rest of her life.

If, however, the proof of her virginity was not there, then the young girl was taken to the door of her father's house and stoned.

Why? To keep us all in the fear of the Lord. The girl would die – and her father and mother would have to watch her die. The danger of that happening was enough to make it very important that young men and women remained virgins ... and for

parents to take seriously the responsibility of raising and protecting their children.

2. **Sexual purity.**

Remember, "virginity" means *"still in its natural or original state, innocent, untouched, pure, unused"*.

It is possible to have a sexual experience and yet not actually have sexual intercourse. This is done by touching or rubbing, etc.

Do experiences like this change the original state or condition of a person? Do they change innocence? Purity? Does the person get used?

Yes! Before being involved in an experience like this, the person did not have the personal, intimate understanding of sex as they do afterwards. They are not as unfamiliar with sex as they were before.

Make no mistake however; such practices are sexual and considered by God to be sex. Such activities are fornication just as if there had been complete sexual intercourse.

3. **Rape.**

Read Deuteronomy 22:24-27

Verse 24: Both were stoned to death, the man because he was guilty of fornication and rape, and the girl because she did not cry out.

Verse 25: If a girl was raped in the countryside, she may have cried out but no-one heard her. In this case only the man was to die.

If young men today knew they would face death for committing fornication or rape, and if a young lady knew for certain that if she was not a virgin she would be stoned to death, chances are they would both be virgins until they married.

Young ladies would cry out loudly if sexually abused – and men would not try to rape any woman if they knew they would be stoned to death.

This is how seriously God views sexual sin.

4. **Regarding incest** – that is, sexual relations between family members.

If a father, commissioned by God to guard his daughter's purity, commits fornication with her, thereby robbing her of her glory and destroying the glory of his home, he is guilty of a terrible sin against God. The same applies to any member of her family – brothers, uncles, etc.

For a father to allow *anyone*, other than her husband if she marries, to rob her of her virginity is sin.

E. The sign of the marriage covenant

The very nature of covenant means that there must be *a sign*. As we saw with God's covenant with Noah, Abraham, etc., every covenant has a sign.

What is the sign of the marriage covenant? **Sexual intercourse.**

Scripture teaches that "the two shall become one flesh". How? Through sexual intercourse.

Even today, if a marriage ceremony is performed but the marriage is never consummated (concluded, finished) by sexual intercourse, the marriage can be "annulled" (cancelled, invalidated, reversed and declared null and void). It is just as if the marriage ceremony had never taken place. It is not a divorce; it is a cancellation.

Note: This is why sex outside marriage is lust, *because there is no covenant between the two people. Any sex outside marriage is sin – this includes homosexuality – because it is outside of covenant.*

"When a man and a woman get married as virgins, and have their first intimate experience, and her hymen is broken, it causes the shedding of blood which then flows over his penis. To God that is the sign that they have entered into a sacred relationship in a blood covenant, which is symbolic of entering into a sacred covenant relationship with God in Christ by the shedding of His blood". (Edward Cole, The Sacredness of Sex.)

This is the reason God is not ashamed when a man and his wife have sex. God does not turn His eyes away, because it is an affirmation (declaration) once again, of the covenant between them. **The shedding of blood, during their first sexual experience, is the external evidence of an internal work. It is a sign.** When God sees a man and wife enjoying sex, He sees their desire to become "one flesh" which is as God intended.

A note to women: God never intended your virginity to be a trophy [trophy = a prize, a memorial] to some man's lust. Nor did God intend you to prove your femininity by teasing or seducing (tempting) a man.

A note to men: Your sex life was never intended to be a testimony of a woman's ability to tease or seduce you ... or your ability to seduce (tempt, overpower) a woman.

F. The desire to have sex is not a good reason to get married

Getting married just to have easy sex, or legal sex, is one of the worst reasons in the world to get married!

Read 1 Corinthians 7:9

"Self-control" is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit – therefore every Christian should be living a life of discipline and self-restraint.

How would you like someone to propose marriage to you like this? "My dear, I want to marry you because I just have to have sex with someone and I am afraid I will sin if I do not have a wife/husband, so please will you marry me"?

There is only one reason for marrying and that is to fulfil the covenant relationship God has given through His great love for mankind – in order to give yourself to another person and in so doing to bring honour and glory to God.

Teacher's notes

- 1.** More information on Covenants can be found in the “Old Testament Survey Books 1 and 2”.
- 2.** There is no change in God's requirements for virginity between the Old and the New Testament. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.
- 3.** Additional Scriptures condemning fornication: Matthew 15:19; Romans 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5.
- 4.** 100 Shekels of silver – the payment for falsely accusing a woman of not being a virgin, was a very heavy fine. (Jeremiah paid only 17 shekels to buy a field, Jeremiah 17:9.)