

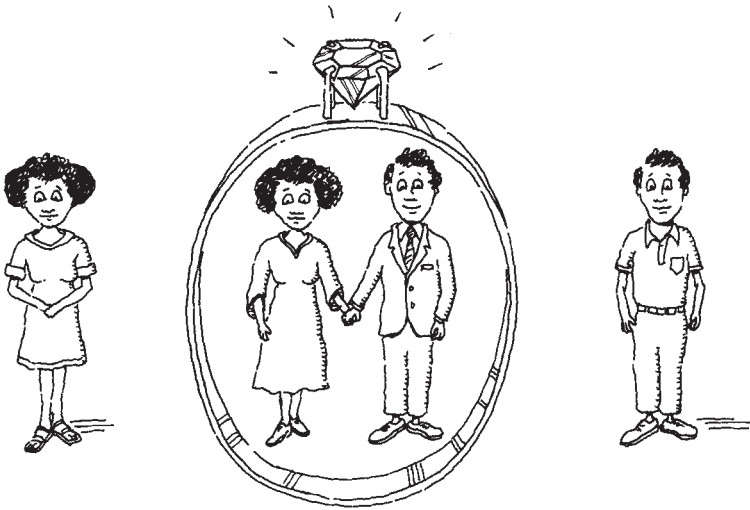
LESSON 7 Sexuality In God's Design

One of the most beautiful relationships in life is that of a man and a woman who join in marriage and become one flesh. Human sexuality is a gift from God which not only enables us to bring children into the world, but also provides for the most intimate union possible between a man and a woman.

Some of life's greatest problems arise when men and women abuse their sexuality. Many people try to deal with their sexuality without benefit of God's revealed wisdom and His enablement to keep their bodies in subjection. As a result, they find themselves trapped in a lifestyle which is unholy and damaging both physically and emotionally.

God has not left us without very specific instructions to govern the powerful sexual drive within us. Whether you are married or single, God expects you to exercise control in this area of your life. The instructions He has given in His Word set the boundaries for sexual expression. Disobedience brings guilt, shame, suffering, and sin into your life. Obedience will make it possible for you to serve the Lord with joy and purity in the distinct sexuality which is His gift to you.

In this lesson we will discuss the boundaries God has set for sexual expression, and we will answer the question, "What are the biblical principles which should govern sexuality in the Christian believer's life?"



lesson outline

Sexuality and Celibacy
Sexuality and Marriage
Disapproved Sexual Practices
Dealing with Sexual Problems

lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- State the biblical principle concerning sexuality and the celibate life.
- Recognize biblical principles concerning sexuality and marriage.
- Give reasons why a Christian should refrain from biblically disapproved sexual practices.
- Explain how we know that homosexuality is a sinful practice.
- Identify from given Scriptures attitudes that will help provide solutions to sexual problems.

learning activities

1. As background for this lesson, read 1 Corinthians 6:12-7:40, and Ephesians 5:22-33.

2. Study the lesson following the study plan given in the learning activities for Lesson 1.
3. You may discover a number of words in this lesson which are new to you. Be sure to look up the meaning of all key words you do not know in the glossary.
4. Take the self-test and check your answers.

key words

abort	heterosexual	procreation
abortion	homosexuality	sexuality
adultery	illegitimate	sublimation
celibacy	infertile	syphilis
degraded	monogamous	venereal disease
fornication	mutuality	
gonorrhea	pregnant	

lesson development

SEXUALITY AND CELIBACY

Objective 1. *State the biblical principle concerning sexuality and the celibate life.*

It is common practice today in many parts of the world for unmarried men and women to establish short-term relationships or casual affairs for the purpose of meeting their sexual “needs.” Sex has become so glamorized by the world that young people feel deprived and unfulfilled if they are not sexually involved. The biblical pattern of *celibacy* (unmarried and without sexual involvement) is unpopular and often unheeded.

Is it possible for a person to remain celibate? Certainly it is! We can draw on the same divine resources to avoid temptation in this respect as we do in other areas of our lives. The Scripture we discussed in Lesson 1—1 Corinthians 10:13—can be applied to our sexual desires as well as to other desires. God *will* give you the power to resist temptation to sin, and this includes the sin of sexual involvement outside of marriage.

Application

1 According to 1 Corinthians 10:13, how will God help you to overcome the temptation of sexual sin?

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Why does God forbid sexual involvement outside of marriage? There are many reasons, and all of them have to do with His love and concern for you. He wants to protect you from these serious problems that we see all around us today:

1. *Illegitimate children.* Children born outside of marriage do not have the privilege of both a father and mother to care for them and fulfill the duties of parents. Often they are neglected and unloved.

2. *An increase in abortions.* Many unmarried women choose to have their pregnancies aborted surgically, rather than give birth to a child outside of marriage. This often results in feelings of guilt for taking the life of the unborn child, causing intense spiritual turmoil and emotional pain.

3. *An increase in venereal disease.* People who involve themselves sexually in casual relationships take a high risk of contracting a venereal disease such as syphilis or gonorrhea, which can also affect unborn children, cause blindness, and cause other physical or mental problems. There is also the threat of AIDS.

4. *Emotional scars.* God did not plan for the act of sex to be separated from a permanent love relationship. When there is no love commitment between sex partners, the result often is a feeling of rejection, or of being abused and degraded. Feelings of guilt cause mental anguish and self-condemnation.

Application

- 2 Guilt feelings are often a warning to us that
- a) there is no hope for us.
 - b) sin does not bother us.
 - c) we should listen to our God-given conscience.
-

Celibacy is the only alternative to marriage sanctioned (approved) by the Bible. In 1 Corinthians chapter 7, the apostle Paul advises those who are unable to remain celibate to marry. Maintaining celibacy in a single life is likely to be more troublesome for someone who is unwillingly single, and who does a lot of thinking and day-dreaming about sex or about being married. In Lesson 6 we saw that the single person who is committed to Christ is a gift to the church. The best way a single person can cooperate with the Lord in maintaining sexual purity is to guard his thoughts (James 1:14-15). In Lesson 2 we talked about the importance of guarding your thoughts so that you will not be tempted to sin. The Lord can and will help you in this regard if you have made up your mind to keep yourself pure. Live

your life in joy and obedience to the Lord. Trust the future to Him in all aspects. He will help you in every step that you take.

Here is a Scripture which will help you deal with sexual needs from the right perspective:

Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:12-13, 19-20).

God *has* provided a way to control sexual desires rather than giving in to them. That way is called *sublimation*—it involves the channeling of sexual tensions into worthy activities. *Sublimation* is defined as “the mental process by which basic sexual drives are unconsciously converted into other socially acceptable endeavors.” Real satisfaction can be found in work, play, social, and religious activities. Sexual energies may be channeled beneficially into art, literature, music, athletics, prayer, devotional study, Christian service, or other meaningful activities that captivate your mind and interest.

Young people should also be encouraged to stay active physically by exercising regularly, engaging in sports, and avoiding lethargy. This will help keep the sexual drive under control and assist the young person refrain from fantasizing and masturbation. Avoiding sexually explicit television programs and movies is also necessary. Though these measures may seem tough, they work and help produce purity.

Application

3 Name two ways a person can maintain sexual purity.

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.....



It must be pointed out that sexual desire is *not* a sin—it is part of our physical makeup and is a gift of God. But it is to be kept in complete subjection until the time of marriage. The Lord can and will provide a fulfilled, overcoming life for the unmarried person who will seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). If it is God's will for you to remain unmarried, He will enable you to discipline this area of your life so that you can “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1-2).



Application

4 What four problems does the celibate person avoid?

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5 Based on what we have discussed in this section, state the biblical principle concerning sexuality and the celibate life.

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The apostle Paul acknowledged that the gift of celibacy was not for everyone, but those who have it can be a special blessing to the kingdom of God as they devote themselves to God's will and serve Him without distraction.

SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

Objective 2. *Recognize biblical principles concerning sexuality and marriage.*

Sexual relations are a normal, honorable part of marriage. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us: "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Hebrews 13:4).

The apostle Paul, recognizing the powerful force of human sexual desire, encouraged those Christians who were experiencing difficulty in controlling this desire to marry, so that they would not be tempted to sin (1 Corinthians 7:9).

What was God's purpose in designing the sexual act as an important part of the marriage relationship?

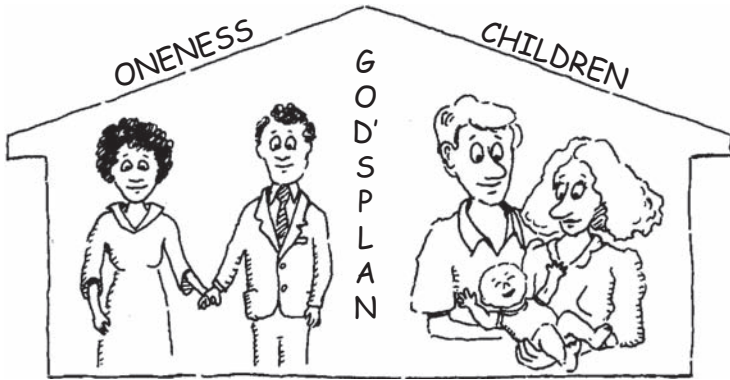
One purpose, of course, is *procreation* (producing children). It was God's plan that the earth be populated with human beings, and so He gave them the desire to have physical union to bring forth children.

For most living creatures, sexual relations take place only during the periods of time when the female can become pregnant. But God created men and women so that they would have sexual desire even during the woman's infertile periods. So the sexual relationship is not limited to the purpose of bringing children into the world. Another purpose of the sexual act is *oneness*. This oneness includes the pleasure experienced in communicating sexual love. God has given the husband and wife the right to enjoy this pleasure regularly.

Oneness is referred to by Jesus in Matthew 19:4-6. The apostle Paul later quoted these words of Jesus when he used this mysterious feature of oneness in the marriage union to picture the spiritual relationship of Jesus Christ to His church:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:31-32).

The aspect of oneness is used as a strong argument against immorality in 1 Corinthians 6:15. Paul explains that since, in the sexual act, the two partners become one, and since believers’ bodies are parts of the body of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit, an immoral sexual act is a terrible sin against Christ as well as against the body.



Application

6 What purpose of the sexual act is indicated in these Scriptures?

- a Genesis 1:28
- b Genesis 2:24



God’s Word gives clear instructions concerning sexual relations within marriage. We will summarize them here:

- 1. *Marriage is a union between one man and one woman.*

This is confirmed in the words of Jesus (Matthew 19:4-6):

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united

to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one."

Thus, sexual relations are permitted only between a man and his wife. This is a lifetime relationship. If either of them enters into a sexual relationship with another person, the one who does so is guilty of the sin of adultery.

2. *Mutuality is the rule for sexual relations within marriage* (1 Corinthians 7:3-4). Both husband and wife are each to consider the needs of the other, with love, mutual respect, and understanding. Paul says very clearly that the wife is not master of her own body, but her husband is. In the same way, a husband is not master of his own body, but his wife is. They are to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21).

In Ephesians chapter 5 the Holy Spirit again prompts Paul to picture the submission and love between Christ and the church by using the illustration of the intimate marriage relationship.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church He who loves his wife loves himself However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Ephesians 5:22-25, 28, 33).

This Scripture describes well the idea of *mutuality*. When a wife is submissive to her husband, including the sexual act, her husband is more likely to respond by showing love than he would be if she denies him this right. In the same way, the husband who shows love in all his actions towards his wife is much more likely to have her respond by being submissive to his desires. Each is to meet willingly the needs of the other.

3. *The husband and wife should not refrain from sexual relations except by mutual agreement*. Such an agreement should be for a short period of time only, and for the purpose of prayer (1 Corinthians 7:5).

There may be other valid reasons for a period of no sexual activity, such as a need for travel to conduct business, serious

illness. However, refraining from sexual relations within marriage is not to be done without good reason and by mutual consent.

Application

7 What warning did Paul give in this regard (1 Corinthians 7:5)?

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4. *Sexual relations safeguard the marriage.* I wonder how many times one partner in marriage has committed adultery because the other partner failed to respond to his or her sexual needs. Normal sexual relations within marriage should keep the married person from giving in to Satan's temptation to look elsewhere for satisfaction because of a lack of self control, or because of bitterness.

The physical union between a husband and wife who love and respect each other provides a basis for a strong marriage and a strong family unit. The love and affection of parents for each other will be felt by their children, who will respond with love and affection.

Application

- 8 Which of the following statements agree with biblical principles concerning sexuality and marriage?
- a The only real purpose for sexual relations is procreation.
 - b Marriage is a lifetime relationship between one man and one woman.
 - c Married couples should refrain from sexual relations only by mutual agreement for a short period of time.
 - d Submission and love are important elements of mutuality in a marriage.
 - e The sexual act provides oneness in marriage, as the two become one flesh.
 - f A husband and wife can protect their marriage by meeting the sexual needs of each other.
 - g If a husband doesn't show love to his wife, she is not required to be submissive.



DISAPPROVED SEXUAL PRACTICES

Objective 3. Give reasons why a Christian should refrain from biblically disapproved sexual practices.

God hates immorality. He has given clear instructions in His Word concerning what is, and is not, permissible. During Old Testament times, sexual immorality among the Israelites was punishable by death to those involved.

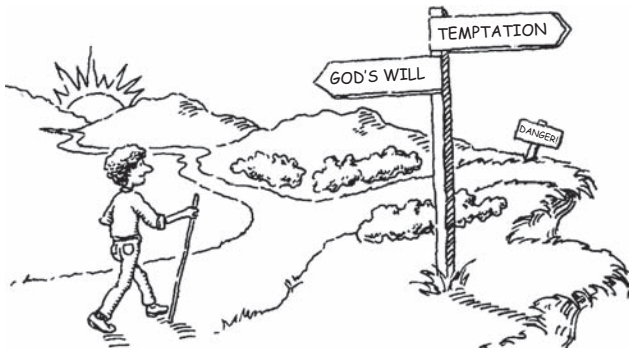
Application

9 Read Leviticus 20:10-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:12–7:40. These Scriptures clearly indicate that sexual relations are approved by God only between

- a) close friends.
- b) family members.
- c) husband and wife.

Leviticus 20 also makes it clear that husband and wife are not to be close blood relatives. Sexual relations between close blood relatives is called *incest* and is strictly forbidden by Scripture. It is also strictly forbidden by most societies of people worldwide.

There are three disapproved practices which are serious problem areas in today's world, and which we wish to discuss briefly in this lesson. They are *adultery*, *fornication*, and *homosexuality*. Christians need to be aware of the danger of temptation in these areas in order to guard themselves or to help others who may be involved in such sexual immorality.



Adultery

Adultery is sexual relations between a married person and someone to whom he (or she) is not married. It can be between a married man and a married woman who is not his wife, or between a married person and an unmarried person. It is also called *extramarital sex*.

One of the ten commandments is this: “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). This Scripture is repeated and the commandment is emphasized many times in the Bible. (See Matthew 5:27-28; Matthew 19:9; Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Application

10 Read Proverbs 6:32. What does it say about the person who commits adultery?

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11 What reason is given in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 for avoiding sexual immorality, including adultery?

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The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:27-28 are a warning to each of us to guard our thoughts carefully and avoid circumstances which might lead us into temptation in this area of our lives. He said: “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Many acts of adultery are the result of careless words or behavior that may have seemed quite innocent to begin with, but which developed to the point where temptation occurred. The Bible tells us to *run*, to quickly get away from such temptation (1 Corinthians 6:18). Daily spiritual preparation will help you to conduct yourself in a Christlike way in all your relationships with members of the opposite sex. (We discussed spiritual preparation in Lesson 3.)

I know of a man who was a strong spiritual leader in his church. He became sympathetic to a widow with two small children, and often took food to her or made repairs when they

were needed in her home. This led to close acquaintance, and the relationship developed slowly until eventually they were overcome by temptation. The man's testimony was ruined, both he and the woman were shamed in the eyes of their families and friends, and there was much pain experienced by all those involved. Even though they repented, and stopped seeing each other, much damage had been done in their lives and in the lives of others. What started perhaps as a spiritual ministry ended in disaster.

Application

12 Look at questions 10 and 11 again. Relate these to the situation described in the preceding paragraph.

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Fornication

Fornication, which involves sexual relations other than between a man and his wife, also refers to sexual relations between unmarried people. We discussed this earlier in the lesson when we talked about celibacy. Sexual relations between unmarried people are referred to as *premarital sex*.

Application

13 What four reasons did we give for refraining from fornication (or remaining celibate)?

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14 Read 1 Corinthians 7:2, 8-9. What should unmarried people do if they are tempted to engage in sexual relations?

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The apostle Paul concludes chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians with these words: "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." A sinful body does not bring honor and glory to God. You honor Him by keeping yourself pure, free from sexual sin. You honor Christ, who paid the penalty for your salvation with His own body through suffering and death.

Application

15 What is the most important reason for keeping yourself pure?

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.....



Homosexuality

Objective 4. *Explain how we know that homosexuality is a sinful practice.*

In some parts of the world, homosexuality (sexual relations between two people of the same sex) is openly advertised as an "alternative" lifestyle. However, the Bible clearly declares homosexuality to be sin.

1. *It is sin because it is contrary to principles of sexuality that God established.* Human sexuality was planned at Creation to be monogamous and heterosexual (one man with one woman). When people choose to be homosexuals, they reject God's principles of sexuality. Romans 1:18-32 explains how this comes about: they do shameful things, they exchange the truth about God for a lie, and so God gives them over to shameful passions. Romans 1:28 says, "Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done."

2. *It is sin because the Bible refers to it as evil.* "Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). (See also Leviticus 18:22-23; Romans 1:21-27.)

3. *It is sin which comes under divine judgment.* “God’s anger is revealed from heaven against all the sin and evil of the people whose evil ways prevent the truth from being known” (Romans 1:18 TEV) (See also Genesis 19:4-11; 24-23.) Genesis 19 describes God’s severe judgment on the city of Sodom where the sin of homosexuality was widespread. (See also 2 Peter 2:6 and Jude 7.)

This is not a hopeless situation. The sin of homosexuality can be cleansed and forgiven. In the church at Corinth were former homosexuals who had been delivered from the bondage of this sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul lists homosexuals among those who cannot inherit or possess God’s kingdom. But later in verse 11 he wrote: “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

Application

16 Complete this sentence: We know that homosexuality is a sinful practice because

.....

17 How would you respond to someone who said to you, “I am a homosexual because God made me that way. I cannot change”?

.....

.....



DEALING WITH SEXUAL PROBLEMS

Objective 5. *Identify from given Scriptures attitudes that will help provide solutions to sexual problems.*

It would be impossible in this short space to discuss every type of sexual problem and ways of dealing with each one. Some sexual problems are of a physical nature which may require the help of a physician. Most others would basically be a sin problem, and the solution for those would be *repentance* and *a renewed life*.

God Forgives

In dealing with someone who has been involved in sexual sin, there is an important message to share with them: God forgives.

Application

18 Read John 8:3-11 and answer these questions.

a Why was the woman brought to Jesus?

b What did the crowd want to do with her?
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c What was the attitude of Jesus?

d What did He say to the woman?
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19 Now read Luke 7:36-50. How did Jesus respond to the woman's repentant spirit and faith?



No matter how people may judge you, nor how terrible the results of your sin, there is always forgiveness in Christ. He will not only forgive your sin, but He will help you to have a renewed life!

A Renewed Mind

Those who have committed sexual sin can be assured that not only has God forgiven them when they confessed their sin, but also they are given a renewed mind as they yield themselves to God's will. They are no longer under the condemnation of their sin, because they have been set free from sin. This is what the Bible says about it:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin death Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires . . . the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:1-2, 5-6).

Problems concerning the sexual aspects of life can be especially sensitive and troublesome. But God is sufficient for every problem if we are obedient to His Word. For this reason, knowing the Bible principles which apply is of great importance. We have given you these principles in this lesson. Put them into practice in your own life, so that you may “. . . be transformed by the renewing of your mind” for the instructions He has given so that you will be able to avoid temptation and honor God as the temple of His Holy Spirit.

Application

20 According to Romans 8:5-6, what is necessary in order to have a renewed mind which brings life and peace?

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self-test

MULTIPLE CHOICE. There is one best answer to every question. Circle the letter preceding your choice.

- 1 The most important reason for keeping yourself pure is to
 - a) avoid sexual problems.
 - b) honor God with your body.
 - c) have people's approval.
 - d) find a pure partner.
- 2 A celibate is a person who
 - a) has sexual relations outside of marriage.
 - b) is unmarried and without sexual involvement.
 - c) uses sex only for procreation.
 - d) is unable to practice self-control.
- 3 Sexual relations within marriage are for the purpose of
 - a) procreation.
 - b) oneness.
 - c) both procreation and oneness.
 - d) subjection.
- 4 Which of these has been compared to Christ and the church?
 - a) Relationship of parents and children.
 - b) Celibates and Christian service.
 - c) Procreation.
 - d) The marriage relationship.
- 5 In dealing with someone who has been involved in sexual immorality it is important to
 - a) make him feel guilty.
 - b) make excuses for his sin.
 - c) help him to understand that God forgives a repentant sinner.
 - d) let him know how wrong he has been.
- 6 Which of these does NOT result from sexual immorality?
 - a) Emotional scars and suffering.
 - b) A pure life.
 - c) Illegitimate children.
 - d) Venereal diseases.
- 7 Which of these questions should you ask yourself when tempted to do something which is not clearly discussed in the Bible?
 - a) Will it honor God?
 - b) Will it give me pleasure?
 - c) What can I gain from it?
 - d) Is it permissible for me?

8 Sexual desire is

- a) sinful.
- b) something we can't control.
- c) shameful.
- d) a gift of God.

9 The rule for sexual relations within marriage is

- a) mutuality.
- b) celibacy.
- c) procreation.

10 SHORT ANSWER State three reasons why we know homosexuality is a sin.

- a)
- b)
- c)

11 Refer to Scripture texts in this lesson and in Lesson 2 and give two Scriptures which you might use to help persons who make the following statements to know what the Bible has to say about their problem.

a "We can't afford to get married yet, but we love each other, so that makes sexual relations okay."

.....

b "Why should I try to satisfy my husband—he never tells me he loves me or shows me any love."

.....

c "I'm pregnant and my boyfriend won't marry me. I want to have an abortion."

.....

d "I think I can be a homosexual and also be a Christian."

.....

e "I have had such a sinful life I can't be a Christian. God would never accept me."

.....

answers to study questions

- 11** The person who does so is sinning against his own body, which belongs to God, and therefore He sins against God.
- 1** He will provide a way of escape, so that you can bear the temptation without yielding to it.
- 12** The Scriptures given in questions **10** and **11** describe what happened to the man and woman in the situation.
- 2 c)** we should listen to our God-given conscience.
- 13** To avoid the possibility of illegitimate children, abortions, venereal disease, and emotional scars. (Also, it is a sin subject to divine judgment.)
- 3** By guarding his thoughts; by sublimation.
- 14** They should practice self-control, or they should marry.
- 4** He (or she) avoids the possibility of having illegitimate children, causing abortions, getting venereal diseases, or suffering emotional scars.
- 15** To honor God.
- 5** Your own words should include these concepts: Celibacy is the only biblical alternative to marriage. The single Christian is expected to be celibate. His (or her) body belongs to God and is a temple of the Holy Spirit. His sexual desires must be kept in subjection at all time.
- 16** it does not agree with God's principles of sexuality, the Bible calls it evil, and it comes under divine judgment
- 6 a** Oneness.
b Procreation.
- 17** Your answer. I would show him what the Bible says about this practice and how he *can* be changed by being washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God.
- 7** So that you will not lose control and be tempted to sin.
- 18 a** She was caught in the act of adultery.
b Stone her to death, according to the Law.
c Forgiveness.
d "Neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin."

- 8 a** Does not agree.
 - b** Agrees.
 - c** Agrees.
 - d** Agrees.
 - e** Agrees.
 - f** Agrees.
 - g** Does not agree.
- 19** He forgave all her sins.
- 9 c)** husband and wife.
- 20** We must live in accordance with the Holy Spirit.
- 10** He lacks judgment, destroys himself, brings blows, disgrace, and shame upon himself.

For Your Notes
