



What does the Bible say about premarital sex and extramarital sex?

In Western society, sex is idolized in movies, TV shows, magazines and Internet sites. Advertisers exploit sex to sell every imaginable product. Promiscuous sex is often presented as exciting, glamorous and normal, but its negative consequences are seldom mentioned.

The Bible gives a different view. "Sexual immorality" is denounced in about 25 passages in the New Testament. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, the word translated as "sexual immorality" or "fornication" is the Greek word *porneia* which includes all forms of illicit sexual intercourse:

[Jesus] went on: "What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.' For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'" (NIV, Mark 7:20-23)

The apostle Paul, in his letters to the Galatians, wrote these verses:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NIV, Galatians 5:19-21)

And in his first letter to the Thessalonians:

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; (NIV, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

The Bible does not provide a list of all the acts that constitute "sexual immorality," but it is generally believed that any form of genital contact with another person, except between husband and wife, is prohibited by Bible teachings. Premarital sex and other extramarital sex do not receive the strong, specific condemnation in the Bible that adultery does, but they are almost certainly included within the term "sexual immorality:"

But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. (NRSV, 1 Corinthians 7:2)

The bond of marriage provides emotional and financial security for the husband and wife, a stable and secure environment for their children, and prevents the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Many people, especially teenagers, feel pressured to be sexually active in our sex-saturated society. However, the risks of disease, unintended pregnancy, and emotional damage from sex outside of marriage make the Bible's advice seem very practical as well as spiritually healthy.