

WoH 456

Sex before Marriage – God’s Perspective

Miriam: Isn’t it a pity about Angela? I heard that she’s pregnant...that’s why she hasn’t been at school these last few weeks. It’s sad that she can’t finish school.

Rachel: Silly girl! She wasn’t very careful! I wonder if she will come back to school? I suppose her mother can look after the baby.

Carol: Hello my friend, and welcome to *Women of Hope*. I’m Carol.

Tammy: And I’m Tammy. We were just listening in to a conversation between two friends. Rachael was doing Miriam’s hair, and they were chatting. Let’s listen some more.

Miriam: Some of the girls at school play around with the boys and get pregnant, and then someone else has to look after their babies. Is that fair? I think God’s rule is a good rule, that we shouldn’t have sex before we are married and can care for a baby properly.”

Rachel: Nah, I don’t agree with that! Why would God say that we shouldn’t have some fun? If it feels good, it can’t be wrong! And look at you...just because you don’t want to sleep with the boys, you don’t have a boyfriend. You’re really missing out! You’re pretty and smart. You could get any boy you want! What are you waiting for? Have some fun!”

Miriam: But it’s dangerous to sleep with boys before you’re married! You could get pregnant, yes...but you could also catch a lot of nasty diseases. You could even catch HIV!

Rachel: Just don’t have sex with boys who look sick!

Miriam: But Rachel, you can’t tell whether a boy has a disease or not just by looking at him!

Tammy: Maybe we should talk a bit about these ‘nasty diseases’ Miriam mentioned. Often we don’t like to talk about diseases that are spread by sexual contact, because it’s embarrassing.

Carol: Yes, it is hard to talk about, and they are truly nasty diseases, horrible to think about. But at least we should know what the signs and symptoms are, so that if they

happen, you can get the disease treated quickly. Tammy did some research for us and found out the things to watch for.

Tammy: There are quite a few different diseases, but here are some things to watch for, if you have had sex with someone who may have had sex with someone else. Some of the signs are in the private parts - things like itching, pain, discharge, a bad smell, and burning when you pass urine. There can be sores, or warts, or tiny lice that live in the pubic hair that cause terrible itching. But you need to know that some of the diseases don't have these symptoms that you can see or feel. But they cause general illnesses of the whole body. HIV-Aids is one of them. So you might not realize you have a disease passed through sex. If you think you might have been infected, it's important to see a health worker or doctor straight away, even if you *are* embarrassed, because the sooner they're treated, the better. Often they will give antibiotics to treat infection. These diseases can cause serious illness, or make you unable to have children, or even lead to death, if they are not treated quickly and properly. Don't depend on traditional medicines; go and see a doctor or health worker.

Carol: Thanks for that Tammy. Some people think condoms will protect them. If you're married to someone who may be infected, it is certainly worth him using one, but they are not 100% protection against all these diseases.

Tammy: Doesn't it make you realize how wise it is not to have sex until you're married and then be faithful to each other in your marriage? Then you'll be safe, and have peace of mind.

Carol: Let's hear what else Miriam had to say.

Miriam: Even if I didn't catch a disease, if I'd slept with someone else before I met the man I want to marry, I'd feel really sorry. I'd be second-hand! Used! And I'd feel like I could never trust my husband later, if he thought having sex with *anyone* is OK."

Rachel: Ah! Rubbish! Everyone's doing it.

Miriam: No, everyone's *not* doing it! And I want to finish my schooling well, and train to do a good job. I need to concentrate on my studies now. Hey, do you remember Susan? She had to marry her boyfriend because she was pregnant, and she had an awful wedding day because she was vomiting all day! And she knew that her boyfriend had only married her because she was pregnant. She knew that he didn't love her and was still sleeping with

other girls even after they were married! How awful. I want someone who will really love me and care about me and be mine alone. Someone who will be kind and good and faithful. Someone who will be my friend all my life, just like God planned marriage to be. So I really want to wait and keep myself clean until I'm married, even though it *is* hard.

Rachel: Oh, listen to you! You should try it!

Miriam: You think I'm missing out on fun, not having a boyfriend like the other girls. Sure I'd like a boyfriend and I want to have fun. But do I really have to sleep with a boy to make him like me? Will I never have a boyfriend if I say "No" now? But what would happen if I get a disease or if I get pregnant? That would be awful! And I hear how people talk about girls and boys who play around with sex - they don't respect them much. No, Rachel, I'll wait!

Rachel: How are you going to manage that? You see us all with boyfriends, and you'll feel lonely and left out! You're being stupid! Come on!

Miriam: No!...but it's difficult...God made sex to be fun, but then we're not allowed to enjoy it until after we're married. That's hard! But the rules he made are *good* for us...so that we don't ruin our bodies and our lives. Look what happened to Mary. She decided to sleep with Peter so that he would like her, and she found out too late that he'd given her a nasty disease, and now she'll never have a baby! No...I have to trust God to provide the right husband, if that's what he wants for me. I'll wait, just like he wants me to, but he will have to help me!

Rachel: You really are making life difficult for yourself. I want to have fun and be happy, don't you?

Miriam: Yes, of course I do! But does that make you *really* happy deep in your heart? I hope that God has a good husband somewhere for me, and I've promised him that I'll wait. God will help me to keep his rules, so that I'm *really* happy, now...and later. Having sex with the boys might be fun for a little while. But then I could get pregnant or catch a disease, and I would feel dirty and bad in my heart. That's not really happiness, is it? So...I'll wait.

Rachel: You know...maybe you're *right*.

Carol: You're with *Women of Hope*. We've been listening in on Miriam and Rachel. Rachel thinks that it's just fun to have sex before marriage, but Miriam thinks it's too risky. She's afraid of getting pregnant or catching diseases, and she also thinks God gave us rules for living that will be the best for us. I wonder what *you* think about this?

Tammy: Have you ever baked a cake and forgotten the recipe? I did last week, so I just put in what I thought would be good. My goodness...it was a disaster! I put in the wrong things and some in the wrong amounts, and I forgot a couple of other things that should have been in there! It was terrible! Don't ever try to bake a cake without following the recipe!

Carol: (Laughing)! Well, that's what happens when you don't follow the recipe...or when you don't follow the instructions or the rules! But isn't that like what Miriam was talking about? Rachel does not want to follow God's rules about sex, and I'm afraid she'll make a huge mess of her life and in the end feel hurt and sad.

Tammy: Have you seen that happen - maybe it's happened to you?

Carol: Hmmmm...God has given us a lot of rules, hasn't he? Some people think that he's cruel, giving us all these rules. But rules are to *help* us! If you bought a farm animal, you would find out how to look after it, wouldn't you? And when we buy a new phone, we read the instruction book and figure out how it's supposed to work so that we don't break it. And when we want to cook something, we have to follow the recipe if we want it to come out tasting good. No-one complains about those rules and instructions!

Carol: And we're no different...our maker, God, gave us instructions so that we would not mess up our lives. If we're smart, we'll follow those instructions! Miriam was very wise wasn't she?

Tammy: How about you? Are you following God's instructions? He has given us a recipe for our lives, and if we don't follow that recipe, our lives will not come out well at all. If we don't follow his instructions, we'll mess up and spoil our lives. That's not good!

So what are God's instructions? Let's find out so we *can* follow them. Did you know, we can find them in God's word, the Bible?

Carol: Here on *Women of Hope*, we've been talking about God's instructions. He has given us rules, to live our lives well. Perhaps we should look at what the Bible says about marriage and sex.

Tammy: Well, first, it's clear that God designed our bodies to feel sexual desires and to enjoy sex. In the story of creation, it says that God especially made humans male and female, and he blessed them and said, 'Have many children...' (Gen 1:27-28) Later, Solomon, a famous wise king, wrote 'enjoy life with the wife who you love' (Ecc 9:9). Did you know that the Bible also includes beautiful love poems describing love-making? (Song of Solomon)

Carol: But God also made *marriage* right from the beginning didn't he? I remember it says 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife, and they become one.' (Gen 3:23) There is a very close bond made between a married couple. Marriage was meant to be between one man and one woman, from the very beginning.

Tammy: Miriam said something about God's 'rules' about sex. The Bible is very clear that some sex is right and some is wrong. Listen to these words, written to Jesus' followers. 'Marriage is to be held in honour by all, and husbands and wives must be faithful to each other. God will judge those who are immoral and those who commit adultery.' (Heb 13:4) In the Ten Commandments, the law God gave his people, it says: 'You shall not commit adultery'. (Ex. 20:14)

Carol: Adultery is when a married person has sex with someone who is not their husband or wife. That is also called 'unfaithfulness'. God tells us to be faithful to our marriage partners. But you may be thinking, 'Yes, we shouldn't cheat on our husbands, but what if I'm not married yet?

Tammy: There was a leader in the early Christian movement, called Paul. He wrote a letter to some young believers in Jesus. It's in God's word, the first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 7. Let me read part of that letter, that God inspired him to write.

'...because there is so much immorality, every man should have his own wife, and every woman should have her own husband... Each should satisfy each other's needs' (1 Cor 7:2)

Carol: Sounds like he meant that sex outside marriage is wrong doesn't it! But in marriage we can satisfy our natural desires in a safe and right way, with plenty of time to get to know each other's needs. Sex is God's good gift, and marriage is the right place for it.

Tammy: Paul wasn't saying that everyone *must* get married. A little later, he said it could be good *not* to marry, if you could control yourself (v8). He *was* saying that God has given us marriage for our sexual fulfillment, and we shouldn't have sex before that.

Carol: Someone asked me: 'If sex *outside* marriage is wrong, is sex *inside* marriage always good?' What do *you* think? ...

Tammy: So what did you say, Carol?

Carol: I said that you can use *any* good thing in a bad way! (laugh) Sex can be used selfishly, to control, or bully, or blackmail - and women can be as guilty as men. When Paul wrote to married couples, he said: 'submit yourselves to one another, because of your respect for Jesus Christ' (Eph 5:21). Then he talked about showing love and consideration, thinking first about what the *other* one needs at this time.

Tammy: That sounds like a recipe for a happy marriage, don't you think?

Carol: It's worked for me! (or a brief personal comment if appropriate). But seriously, sexual temptation can come at any time, and we need to think about how we will respond. Let's ask God to give us the strength and determination to follow his way, because his way is the best way in the end

Tammy: But let me say this, dear friend: if you've messed up your life in this way, God understands, and he's willing to forgive you. Can I tell you a story from God's word about this? It's about God's son, Jesus Christ, when he was here on earth. (Luke 7:36-50)

Tammy: A religious leader invited Jesus to have dinner with him. So Jesus went to his house, and they sat down to eat. Now in that town there was a woman who had lived a really bad life. She had really messed up her life. When she heard that Jesus was eating there, she took a precious fine stone jar, full of expensive perfume. She stood behind Jesus, at his feet, crying softly and wetting his feet with her tears. Then she dried them with her long hair, and poured the perfume on them.

The host of the dinner thought that Jesus shouldn't let her touch him, because of the bad things she had done. But Jesus told him, 'Her many sins have been forgiven. The great

love she has shown proves it! Whoever has been forgiven a little shows only a little love.' Then Jesus said to the woman, 'Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you; go in peace'.

Carol: I love that story Tammy. You can see how sorry that woman was. She took a risk coming into the house of the religious leader - he was likely to throw her out. And she cried, too. She wanted to give Jesus the best thing she had...expensive perfume. Have you ever felt like that - really sorry for what you've done?

Tammy: That story tells me that whatever we've done, we can come to God and tell him we're really sorry. He will forgive us and send us on in peace. If you've messed up, you can ask him now to forgive you, in Jesus' name. He can wash you clean and give you a new dignity and a new start (1 Cor 6:9-11). Ask him to help you to do the right thing now. Whatever mistakes you've made, God loves, you, he values you, he will give you new hope.

Carol: We need to go now. We'd love to hear your story - you can contact us...

Tammy: Goodbye for now, and God bless you.

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