

Learning To Live In Love

"If you've never seen a relationship that lasts forever, you tend not to believe its possible" (Olivia Newton-John)

You were born in a generation that never learned how to really love. "Who needs a heart when a heart can be broken?" God wanted us to learn to love by seeing both our parents first love each other and then us. You were supposed to learn how to love Him by seeing your dad really love your mom and then your really parents love you.

Then an entire generation of parents dropped the ball. Like our very first parents, they didn't do what He said and did what He said not to. You happened to be born in a world that has blown it big-time. The one good thing that has come from the bad things that have happened to marriages, homes and families all over your world is this: You know that when people say that sex is the "real answer" to loneliness and lack of love, they are either plain stupid, not looking at what is going on or they lie. Kids today hate divorce and hate child abuse. When you've been through it yourself, you don't wish it on anyone. Yet how do you stop the vicious cycle? How do you break the chain? *"You have two fears"* says Josh McDowell *"The fear that you'll never be loved. The fear that you'll never be able to love."*

If your parents divorce you can go through all your life wondering what *you* did to make them break up. People telling you it wasn't your fault doesn't change the sense of guilt. Worse than death, divorce goes on and on and on to hurt you through all the hoped-for holidays and high points of your life. *God hates divorce.* (Mal. 2:16) It breaks the bond He built to shelter you from many of the worst feelings a kid can ever experience. If your parents have split up you already know what I mean. The worst pain of your life and your greatest fear is all around the same thing: *losing your family.*

Now, here you make a choice. *Do you want this to happen to you?* Do you want to pass on the same pain to those who will learn from your life?

What's Love Got To Do With It?

When was the last time your media ever told you the truth about sexual sin? No one on TV pays the price of illicit sex. No one in the movies gets herpes or AIDS when they jump into bed with their fun current partner of the moment. Nobody that sings the songs connects their "I want your sex" life-style with the constant pain, crazy rages and suicide. No one on video gets hurt, blown apart at heart or devastated when they casually throw away their future with their virginity. MTV plugs sexual songs, cultivates sexual situations, pushes you into "safe sex". Then

it offers the almighty cure: *use a condom*. True lies. "Sex cures loneliness. Sex makes you feel good about yourself. Sex makes you happy. Sex is like a box of chocolates." *Excuse me?*

In the movies everybody is pretty, everybody looks good, everybody has great sex with anybody, anytime with no consequence. *Pretty Women* marry millionaires. (There's no sequel, because the marriage only lasts as long as the credits.) On screen, the famous "sexually active" athlete always gets the girl and he lives happily ever after. In real life he gets AIDS or goes to jail for rape or murder.

Only once in a long while will a man's single casual "*Fatal Attraction*" threaten his future peace of mind, his job, his home, the life of his whole family. Only once in a blue moon will you ever see what a "*Kramer vs. Kramer*" divorce does to a child and to both parents. Only now and then will a man from a people who "*Once Were Warriors*" learn that violence and immorality in a family lead to destruction and death.

Such rare exceptions to the rule of fantasy always hit a nerve. Somewhere deep in our souls we know what God says is true: "*Shun immorality. Every sin a man commits is outside the body. But he that commits sexual wrong sins against his own body.*" (I Cor. 6:18-19) And judgment comes like Jason, when kids out only for a little illicit sex-play run into something wholly unexpected, terrifyingly impassive and invariably fatal. "*The soul that sins it shall die.*" (Ezek. 18:4)

Sleep with someone and *you sleep with everyone they've slept with*. Give yourself to someone sexually and you give away part of your soul that you will never get back.

Sex is never just sex. God says sexual sin is like nothing else in the book. It can hurt you physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It can screw up your life in ways you would never have dreamed. Blow it here and you blow it big-time. "If we persist in sexual sin with the thought that one day we will get right with God, we should remind ourselves that God may still be there to forgive and restore ...but we may not be." *You cannot compensate by sacrifice what you lose through disobedience.* (Ed Cole)

SEVEN REASONS TO SAVE SEX FOR MARRIAGE:

(1) Debt:

Over a million teenage girls get pregnant every year. Free love isn't free. Each baby born to a teen outside of marriage demands more than \$100,000 in government welfare. The cost of teenage child-bearing in the US alone in a single year is over 16.5 BILLION dollars! But the cost is much higher than that. What price do you put on a hurt heart? How much is a mind worth without

peace? Who counts the cost of a shattered and shamed self, a lost trust, ruined respect or a broken dream? What does it really cost to bring an unwanted baby into the world, or even worse to take its little life because it interferes with someone's personal pursuit of pleasure? Free sex is never free. Someone always pays. Promiscuity has an awful price. *"You are not your own."*(1 Cor. 6:19-20)

(2) Disease:

Twenty years ago there were two sexually transmitted diseases. Now there are twenty-nine. Every nine months they find a new one. Twelve million people contract a sexual disease every year in the US alone; 33,000 a day. Some, like AIDS, will kill you in just a couple of years. Some will just make you *wish* you were dead. Some will hurt your children.

"If you were the Devil" said one AIDS researcher "You couldn't conceive of a disease more disruptive and disturbing than one sexually transmitted that kills within a short period and for which there is no treatment." There is only one way to be sure you don't get acrippler or killer disease through sex but no one wants to say it:

Marry a virgin as a virgin yourself and both of you live with the same love all your life.

That's God's plan. If you take a long look at the ugly alternatives, it looks like He knows what He's talking about. (Prov. 5:15-20)

True sexual freedom doesn't just mean "never having to say you are sorry". It *never* means the ability to sleep with anyone as often as you like. *You can't love someone you fear*. Real sexual freedom means to be able to love without walls, without caution, without cares; to be able to trust the one you love without reservation and without hesitation. All this is possible in marriage - and only in marriage. (Prov. 27:21-27)

(3) Disappointment:

She did it because he said he "loved" her. He pushed her into it because he wanted to prove he was a real man. Her friends said it was all right as long as she really loved him. His friends told him everybody else had and what was he waiting for? Everybody said even if it doesn't work out it won't matter. *And they were utterly wrong.*

Sex is never casual. Sex is God's gift, and nothing God ever gives is casual. Because sex itself is so deep, sexual hurt is never shallow. What you do and what you learn in sex builds a pattern, burns a memory that will last you for life. Short of the healing hand of Jesus, scars from sexual sin *never* go away. Each time you link your body and your soul to someone else, the re-runs start of

everything you have done before with anyone else. That is why "try before you buy" is such a stupid idea when it comes to sex. In the trying is the buying. You cannot just learn sex casually from someone and then divorce it from someone else you want to really care about in the future. Every hurt, every disappointment, every rejection carries over to the next time. You can't avoid the re-runs.

(4) Distrust:

What's so wrong with giving in before marriage? What difference does a piece of paper make? If you love someone enough to get engaged, what harm can it be to get in a little early? How else will you know that you are compatible? If you love someone, *why wait?*

"Not all of passion is love and not all of love is passion". (Ed Cole).

One thing is sure; the very best way to hurt a growing friendship is to violate the rules that set up your trust. *Over half of all engagements break up.* Many shatter precisely because the couple thought early sex wouldn't make that much difference. A broken engagement without sexual involvement means some pain and sadness, but rarely loss of friendship and certainly no sense of sin. The guilt, anger, mutual loss of respect and embarrassment that go with broken engagements triggered by premarital sex is pain few want to live with.

Think of God's love-laws as a shelter within which you will share together the best friendship, the best spiritual life and the best sex possible. He has reserved sex for one place and one place alone; marriage. Only in marriage can you build a home for real trust and total openness to each other. Only in marriage can you create the kind of life-long commitment you give to each other, "in sickness and health, for richer or poorer, till death do us part." Only in marriage can you be totally open and vulnerable to someone else knowing they will never leave you, laugh at you or let you down. *The reward of the trustworthy is more trust.* Living together outside of marriage is a commitment not to make a commitment. Staying on your best behavior you never really take off your mask. You never get real before each other and God.

The fence of no sex before marriage is a key test of trust. Keep your gate locked from all others and from each other until God gives you the key in your public, sacred vows. But jump that fence early, and you violate that trust. You will never be sure from that time on if you can trust either your partner or yourself. You will always live with the secret question: *If we jumped the fence once and broke the rules, who says it won't happen again? If we couldn't trust ourselves to hold back before marriage, how can we ever be sure it can't happen to either of us after marriage?* And that fear hurts love. (I Jn. 4:18)

(5) Dilution:

Every sexual act is a *giving away of yourself*. Do it with a dozen and you tear

away twelve parts of your secret inner self that you will *never* get back. Why do you think so many people with multiple sexual partners feel so empty and disappointed that they move on to someone else? What you are looking for is MORE. God designed sex to be an investment in each others' lives forever. To love someone is to work for their highest good. Sex in loving marriage builds long-term wholeness. Sex in marriage is God's way of making two people "one". (Gen. 4:1) The Bible word for sexual intimacy is to "know" another: to be close and share on the most deep and lasting level a man and woman can experience. (Eph. 5:20-32) You can love and be loved forever! But every sexual act with a stranger strains or shatters the bond you build with the one you want as the love of your life. The ghosts come back to get you. (Prov. 5:16-20)

(6) Dependency

Sexual sin addicts. Sex, divorced from commitment and care, carries its own in-built emotional black hole. *Addictions form when you try to derive lasting pleasure from something that cannot in its very nature satisfy.* Sex outside of God's loving laws can never fully satisfy. Go the wrong way on this from the start, and you will find that sex can hook you worse than any drug, and with as dangerous consequences as any chemical. (Eph. 5:3-9)

Sexual addiction doesn't have to involve someone else. You can become sexually addicted by masturbation, visual or audio pornography. Sexual sin is not always **fornication** or sex with an unmarried person. (1 Cor.. 6:18) Sexual sin can be **adultery** (sex with someone married and not to you) (Matt 5:27-28) **sodomy** or **lesbianism** (sex with someone of the same sex) (Lev. 18:22, Rom 1:24-32) and any form of near-sex that allows anything except actual intercourse. (Rom 13:13-14)

The Bible says: "Don't you know that you are God's house of worship and [that] the Spirit of God is living in you? If anyone ruins His temple, God will waste them; for God's temple is holy, *and you are that temple.*" (1 Cor. 3:16) A temple is a place filled with God, where you walk with care. You don't go casually where you clearly don't belong.

Deep in the core of your life Jesus dwells. Far below the stream of words, ideas, fears, worries and imaginations, *He lives in you.* You can learn to dive down through the clutter of the crowd in the outer court of the surface of your life and commune with the Living God. Learn to pull out from the crowd. Anywhere, at any time, you can go where God is. Learn to wait on Him in the stillness and hear His voice. Let God show you what He sees when He calls sexual wrong *sin*. We only really learn by revelation or results.

Get it straight: those who aren't right or real with God won't run or rule with Him. Scripture says "Don't be fooled: no one who is immoral, an idol-worshipper, adulterer, sissified or a sodomite - will share in His Kingdom. Thieves, drunks,

greedy people or those who so hate others they put them down or rip them off won't make it." (1 Cor. 6:9)

Sex is so powerful and fundamental in life that misused it becomes wholly devastating. Nothing hurts as much as the guilt, pain and addiction of immorality. Only Christ can heal the scars it makes and marks on life.

As with drugs, the worst part of the hook is never physical. What really hurts is what it does to your mind and feelings. The Bible word "*concupiscence*" means to be so turned on you cannot turn off. (1 Thess. 4:3-8) Sex in violation of God's law shuts the door to Heaven and opens the gates of Hell. Get hooked on sex and only God's mercy can get you free and healed. If you don't want to get hooked, stay away from hookers. (Prov. 5:1-23)

(7) Divorce:

You know what you are looking for. You think you know where to look for what you need. *Not to be lonely anymore. Not to feel left out, unwanted, unloved. To belong to someone wonderful. To be safe. To be cared for forever.* Maybe even marriage. But when so many marriages crash and burn all around you, you need to do it right the first time.

Does sex outside of God's laws for love lead to closeness, care and commitment? Quick answer: *No way.* Almost without exception, pre-marital sex ruins friendships and puts the lid on any chance of long-term love. Promises flow freely in the heat of the moment, but in the cold light of the morning after, caresses often turn into contempt. "*If you love me, you'll prove it,*" puts pressure on you to perform or be rejected. The right response to such glandular fever is this: "*If you really love me, you won't ask me to.*" A single night of compromise isn't worth a lifetime of regret. Making love doesn't make him love you.

The test of true love isn't sex but *trust*. "If you love someone, you will always be loyal to them no matter what the cost. You will always believe in them, always expect the best of them and always stand your ground in defending them." (1 Cor. 13:4-7 Living Bible)

Sex outside of marriage invariably leads to some kind of hurt, and hurt over sex sets a pattern for any future partner. *Breaking up is hard to do.* Do it often in dating and you set a precedent for your future. The pattern of dating and discarding carried into marriage is called divorce. So you hate what happens in a divorce? So does God. (Mal. 2:15-16)

Do you want your life to be different?

Listen carefully: You can have a marriage that lasts. You can have a family that doesn't break up. You can stay married to one person and love them for as long as you both live. Learn from those who failed. Then don't do what they did. STAY

CLEAN. Save yourself for the special someone God can bring along at the right time. *You are worth the wait.*

Give yourself to somebody who isn't the right person and you can't get back what you lose. As one guy put it: "It's like giving someone a million dollars and later finding out you gave it to the wrong person. Now they're gone and so is your money. Gone for good. You don't have it anymore. And the person who should have had it will never get it."

There's only one first time. Let it be with the one you'll spend the rest of your life discovering together.

A WORD FOR THE SINGLE

It's O.K. to be single. To choose not to marry because your calling, vocation or life-style points in a different direction, or because you just haven't found someone you want to spend the rest of your life with is not weird. Some of God's greatest are men and women who lived without marriage. It is the choice of many today. Some had many friends, close to them for a life-time. Yet for one reason or other, they decided to live single.

To be single and to have the grace to live single without sexual involvement is a gift God can give to those few who make the choice to share their deepest and most intimate love with God alone. (Luke 18:29) Christian singles can feel lonely at times, but are never alone. They learn Jesus is the true source of all love and friendship, and free up their time to pay undivided attention to a world without His love. (Isa. 56:3-5) There are places singles can go that are out of range for those with the responsibility of a family. In difficult or dangerous times or situations, a single can do things and dare things that would put someone married in unnecessary risk. At the edge of the end of time, many will choose to remain unmarried for the Kingdom's sake. As Paul the single who became the greatest figure in the early church other than the disciples put it:

"I wish everyone could get along without marrying, just as I do. But we are not all the same. God gives some the gift of a husband or wife, and others he gives the gift of being able to stay happily unmarried. So I say to those who aren't married and to widows - better to stay unmarried if you can, just as I am. But if you can't control yourselves, go ahead and marry. It is better to marry than to burn with lust." (1 Cor. 7:7-9)

"Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. ...Keeping God's commands is what counts. Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him." (1 Cor. 7:17-20 - The Living Bible)

HOW TO GET CLEAN

"Flee forbidden longings, those lusts that lure you when you are young. Press instead into what is real and right in character: conviction and faithfulness, unselfish affection. Rest content in Him with those who also call on the Lord's help for a clean heart." (2 Tim 2:22)

You may have already deeply, terribly blown it. You may have failed in this area and hurt God, yourself and only God knows how many other people. But Jesus can do what no one else can do. He can heal you in levels no one else can see or understand. He can make a girl who has given away her sexual purity clean again, inside and out. He can give a guy back his manhood and dignity, and give him power to be a promise-keeper. He can restore what is eaten away and give you courage to face the world with a new set of eyes. But you must do things His way now and not turn back to what hurt you before.

The steps you take to being clean in Jesus' sight are the same basic steps you take to become a real child of God. *Confession. Repentance. Forgiveness. Trust. Cleansing.* See the appendix "**How To Become God's Child**" for these steps.

Three extra things will help when you are being healed by Jesus from sexual sin.

(1) **Expect miracles not magic.** God's forgiveness is real and immediate; true healing may take time. You can be cured at once; recovery from the damage may take time. Don't be discouraged if it does. You may have many battles, but with Him you will win the war. Trust Him. Rest in the real and ongoing grace of Christ. When David sinned sexually in Scripture he hurt more than himself. The things he did had consequences, and forgiveness does not always stop consequences. (2 Sam. 12:9-14)

Sin *hurts*. Do wrong and you almost always affect others (even unborn generations) even though you stop it and even after you repent and get right. Live with it. Expect God to show you what you need to be fully free, no matter what it takes. The big miracle is always this: God loves and **really forgives**. Jesus died, stripped bare and humiliated and cut off from friendships and family for our sake. When He rose from the dead, He rose clothed forever with light and power and majesty to make us friends with God and put us in His own forever family. You are made fully whole. You become not just a forgiven sinner, but a **new creation** in Christ. (2 Cor. 5:17) "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness.*" (1 John 1:9)

(2) **God is faithful.** Your cleansing is not by your own devotion or your own determination. Power over sin comes from a fresh revelation of Christ at your own point of humble (even desperate) need. Victory over sin never comes by self-effort or self-discipline. You commit your life to Jesus; He commits His life to

you. *He can keep you for the long haul.* Hang your life and your love on His mercy. And remember: You may have times of struggles, doubts and tears, but Jesus never changes. His love and commitment to you is not based on your final faithfulness to Him, but on His own unchanging character. God references all His actions to His own lovely value. When you finally hit bottom, Jesus is already there. "*If we believe not, yet He is faithful; He cannot deny Himself.*" (2 Tim. 2:13)

(3) **Enlist a friend.** In the time of His greatest test and temptation, Jesus asked His closest disciples to be with Him in the garden to pray. He Himself was God. His Father was God. He had God the Holy Spirit's power without measure in His life as a man. *What did He need friends for?* Learn the lesson: even Jesus was not ashamed to ask for friends to be near when He most needed to be strong. If you have a close friend who knows you well enough to pray for you when you face a big battle, he is a friend indeed. (Ecc. 4:9-10).

"The Daniel Files - On-Line"

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