

Intimacy Outside of Marriage

Is intimacy outside of marriage okay for Christians today? The plain answer is *no*. Both direct commands and several principles teach us that sexual intimacy is to be confined to marriage. I could give even more reasons than the ones listed below, but I think these should be enough to convince anyone bearing the name Christian. Some of them might surprise you.

1. Sex outside of marriage dishonors Jesus Christ and makes a mockery of His marriage to the church.

[Romans 7:4](#) says, *“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”* Spiritually speaking, Christians are married to *“him who is raised from the dead,”* that is, Jesus Christ.

Being spiritually married to Christ does not mean we cannot be physically married in this life. But it does teach us that marriage is something very real and very sacred to God. [Ephesians 5:22-33](#) is very clear about this. I am going to quote this passage and give comments every so often. *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”* A wife cannot submit herself to her “own husband” if there is no such thing as marriage and living together outside marriage would violate this scripture. In [John 4](#), we read of a woman who was living with a man who was not her husband. Jesus clearly agreed that the man was not her husband: *“Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.”* Without any doubt, Jesus did not consider living together to be the same as marriage.

Continuing in [Ephesians 5](#): *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own*

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husbands in everything.” Marriage is a type or picture of the relationship between Christ and the church. Sex outside of marriage breaks that picture and dishonors Christ.

Continuing: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” This beautiful relationship between a husband and wife, which pictures the relationship between Christ and the church, cannot exist outside of the commitment of marriage.

2. Sexual intimacy outside marriage violates God’s purpose for sex and marriage.

After God created Eve from Adam’s rib, we read, “And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” ([Genesis 2:23-25](#)).

Jesus verified the accuracy of this account in the New Testament: “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said,

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For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” ([Matthew 19:3-6](#)). Notice Jesus’ use of the phrase “for this cause.” What cause? The cause that God made them male and female so that they could cleave to one another and become one flesh—in other words, sexual intimacy. But if sex outside of marriage is okay, what would be the purpose of marriage? Clearly, God never intended a couple to share sexual intimacy without being joined together by Him in marriage.

3. Sex outside of marriage is directly forbidden by Scripture.

The two most common Greek words used in the New Testament for sexual intimacy outside of marriage are *moicheuō* and *porneia*. *Moicheuō* is the word translated adultery. It refers to a married person having sexual intimacy with someone who is not his or her spouse. [Matthew 5:32](#) uses both of these words and is revealing: *“But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication (porneia), causeth her to commit adultery (moicheuō): and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery (moicheuō).”* [Matthew 5:32](#) is often understood as saying that adultery is the only biblical grounds for divorce. But, in fact, Jesus uses the more general word *porneia*, which includes both adultery and sexual intimacy before marriage. In other words, God considers sex before marriage so serious a sin that, if, *after marriage*, a spouse finds out about a sexual relationship the marriage partner had with someone before marriage, it is grounds for divorce.

By the way, the Bible calls a person who commits *moicheuō* a *moichos* (adulterer) or a *moichalis* (adulteress). The Bible calls a person who commits *porneia* a *pornos*. In the King James Version, this is translated as either fornicator or whoremonger. [First Corinthians 6:9-10](#) states, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators (pornos), nor idolaters, nor adulterers (moichos), nor*

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effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God.” [Hebrews 13:4](#) says, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers (*pornos*) and adulterers (*moichos*) God will judge.” God could hardly be any clearer.

Notice [1 Corinthians 6:16-18](#): “*What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot (pornē) is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication (porneia). Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication (porneuō) sinneth against his own body.*” Basing his argument on the Genesis account of the institution of marriage, Paul says that a man having sex even with a harlot or prostitute joins the two of them as one flesh. This is a sin against the man’s own body because he has joined his body to that of a prostitute. The principle, of course, would apply to any sex outside of marriage. Flee fornication!

4. The Bible specifically says that living together before marriage is a non-Christian, worldly way to acquire a wife that is based on lust and is forbidden to a Christian.

“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.” ([1 Thessalonians 4:3-7](#)).

“Possess his vessel” this passage is not telling us how to hold a bottle of power drink. Nor is it saying “control his body” as some Bible versions mistranslate it. The Greek word translated “possess” here is *ktasthai*. In other places in the Bible where this word is found, it means “acquire,” “obtain,” or even “purchase.” But it does not

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mean “possess” or “control.” The word translated “vessel” is *skeuos*. In [1 Peter 3:7](#), this same word clearly relates to a husband honoring his wife: *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

“Lust of concupiscence” can be translated, *“passion of desire.”* So, this passage is saying that a man should acquire his wife in sanctification – in a holy manner, not in the passion of desire as those who do not know God do. To do otherwise is to defraud his brother, and we are solemnly warned that *“the Lord is the avenger of all such.”* God does not take our society’s casual approach to sex lightly. A Christian man is not to acquire a wife (and a Christian woman is not to acquire a husband) by trying things out first by living together. This is something that only ungodly people do.

I want to add that sex before marriage blinds the couple to seeing whether they are really a good match. Many times, couples live together thinking that this will help them know whether they should get married. The opposite is true. Sexual intimacy is blinding and binding. A man and woman should keep their relationship non-physical so that they can unemotionally determine whether they are suitably matched. Once the passions are involved, this cannot be done. Couples who live together may eventually marry because they are unable to break their ties of intimacy. But, months or years later, when their incompatibilities surface, the marriage becomes rocky and may break up. It does not pay to violate the order that God has ordained.