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SEXUALITY – A GIFT FROM GOD

*Is sexuality allowed before
and outside of marriage?*

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Thesis

Misconceptions about sexuality, leading to bad practices, is one of the most important causes of weakness in the Christian witness on earth.

Author's Note

In the Autumn of 1994, I held two lectures based on the subject, "Sexuality, a gift from God". The first lecture dealt with a question which concerns many young Christians: "Is sexuality allowed before and out of marriage?" In the second lecture, I handled a question asked by many married Christians: "How do husband and wife deal with sexuality?" Due to the reactions, it seemed reasonable to bring these lectures out in written form. You have now in your hands the result of editing the first lecture. Its contents can be used as a guide for discussions in Youth Groups, etc.

I trust that God will hear my prayers for blessing on this pamphlet, since His Christ is dealt with in this subject in all its facets. And the Honor of Christ is more important to God than anything else.

Middelburg, The Netherlands, November 1994

From the Bible

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24

“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” Matthew 19:4-5

“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.” Ephesians 5:25-32

Foreword

There is much written in the Bible on the subject of sexuality. Although the term “sexuality” cannot literally be found, the meaning behind the term is found throughout the Bible. It is definitely a biblical expression. I will, therefore, be using the Bible frequently, since it is the only thing that can really help us in considering the question: “Is sexuality allowed before and out of marriage?”, which we used as the title for this pamphlet.

The necessity of this publication became increasingly apparent to me the more I considered the subject. In various conversations, whether in person, over the telephone, or in correspondence, the difficulties connected with this topic were made clear. They are difficulties in the countless lives of singles, young and old, but also have grown to a great number among the married. Deuteronomy 6 became important to me after deciding to tackle this subject. In verses 6 and 7, Moses

says to the Israelites: *“And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”* This passage shows Moses commanding the People of Israel to discuss everything he had written with their children. Whether in waking up, going to bed or underway, the parents should always discuss everything written in the Book of Law with their children. This included verses such as Leviticus 18 and 20, where things like marriage, sexual behavior and cleanliness are discussed openly. We also find similar instructions in the book of Joshua. Joshua had read the entire Book of the Law (the five books of Moses) to the People of Israel, including the children, when they had come into the Promised Land: *“And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them”* (Joshua 8:34,35). Based on these verses, I will try to share the teachings of God’s Word on this subject with you.

Introduction

Before I continue, I’d like to say a few things about a woman, Elisabeth Elliot, who wrote a book called *“Passion and Purity.”* She was married to Jim Elliot, but they were not married for long. Their marriage lasted only two years and three months, from October 8th, 1953 to January 8th, 1956. Jim was killed in Ecuador by the spear of an Auca-Indian who he wanted to share the Lord Jesus with. In her book, she writes about the extraordinary way that the Lord gave herself and Jim to each other. She describes the development of their feelings for each other and how they dealt with them. Elisabeth Elliot waited on a

man with whom she could serve God and who put God first in his life.

I think that this is an important matter when dealing with the desire for the opposite sex. You must ask yourself: “Why do I have a desire for the opposite sex? Am I really looking for someone who puts God first in his or her life?”

Elisabeth mentions how very important and also difficult it can be to find an answer to the question of dealing with these feelings and being patient. There is much to be found under the word “patience” in the Bible. It is God’s Will that we always trust in Him and wait upon Him. She held onto another principle: she wanted to marry a man who could go against the mainstream. He should not be distracted by any minute things that could cross his path. Do you expect your future partner to have the courage to go against the current? Elisabeth assumed that such a man would look for a woman with the same principles. She didn’t want to be a woman who was like a discount-item at a garage sale: cheapened, because she had already so often been handled. Purity and honesty were the essence of her relationship with Jim before their wedding.

Purity before marriage is an invaluable thing. Surveys have shown that people who remain pure, i.e. have had no sexual relations before marriage, have a much better chance at a happy marriage life than people who have not remained pure in this regard. I recently read about a national young people’s gathering in Holland with a campaign aiming to better the image of the God-given institute of marriage. Within this campaign, young people are asked to promise not to have sex before marriage. A few days later, over six-hundred young people had signed their promise. Of course, you could ask whether it is necessary for a Christian to make an oath. It is better to leave it to the heart and to ask God for strength in staying faithful to His Word. But it is still wonderful to see that there are young people who are aware that the time before marriage must remain pure. I am primarily addressing such young people, but am sure that

there are clearly noticeable aspects within this subject for everyone.

First signs of Sexuality

The first signs of sexuality and the accompanying feelings are noticeable between the ages of 11 and 13 in girls and appear one to two years later in boys. Girls have their first period at this time. The sexual organs and glands begin to function like an adult's. This means that the fallopian tubes and uterus grow to such an extent that a child could be born. Boys begin to produce sperm and semen, which mostly are ejaculated at night during so-called "wet dreams". At this point, the time-period begins in young people which we call "puberty". After puberty, completed between the ages of 16 and 18, follows adolescence, a time of intellectual development. During this time of puberty, the young person goes through three phases. The first is called auto-erotic. During this phase, the bodily changes attract all their attention onto themselves. It entails the excitement of becoming "big". Often, this is the time when masturbation begins. The second phase is called homo-erotic. One feels very closely bonded to members of the same sex. Many close friendships are developed here. The third phase is the hetero-erotic. It often begins at the end of puberty and begins the stabilization of the actual personality.

These developments are things which you can't do anything about. Everyone has gone through them. But, you can do something about masturbation, which isn't a "development". It doesn't overcome you: you have to do it yourself. It is often the first encounter with sexuality and the responsibilities in dealing with it. It is no insignificant phenomenon. More than 90% of all boys and 60% of all girls have experience in masturbation. And every time these figures are updated, the numbers increase. It's a bit dangerous to speak about this subject, since there are young people who have nothing to do with masturbation. I do

not wish, throughout our discussion, to give them the idea of trying it out.

Open-hearted, not arousing

Nonetheless, I think it is good to talk about this openly, considering the many people involved. The Bible is very open about sexuality; it isn't a prude book. But the Bible does not stimulate. In the same way, I want to talk about this subject without setting off negative feelings in you. I cannot help it if people read this who are in a negative mind-set and then give their fantasies free reign. I know of someone who read the Song of Solomon in an assembly, looking for passages which sexually stimulated him. This is how you can use the Bible negatively. The Song of Solomon is a wonderful description of the love between bride and bridegroom, where physical beauty is thoroughly described without restraint. Somebody describes the beauty of his **own** bride and lists all the parts of her body.

Masturbation

Now to masturbation. This word is probably taken from the Latin "manu stupare", meaning "to rub with the hand". This is typical to masturbation. You rub your sexual organs until you reach sexual stimulation. The climax is called an orgasm, which leads to ejaculation for boys and deep inner satisfaction for girls. Sexual fantasies, fed through sexual literature, photos or movies, often play a very large role. In placing yourself in these situations, you give your sexual experience an enormous impulse to bring yourself to the climax that you're looking for, i.e. the orgasm. So saying, I have mentioned an important characteristic of masturbation, namely, that you lose yourself in it. One of the side-effects is that it is very difficult to stop.

Reasons for Masturbation

Masturbation is not a disease. It is a symptom of an underlying distress, often loneliness. This distress gets some relief in “giving yourself some love”, as a girl once said. There is a feeling of a lack of love. Because of this, one begins with himself. However, the emptiness after masturbation continues and grows. Sexual feelings were not created by God in order to satisfy one’s self or to have mono-sex. They are feelings of togetherness, feelings that are directed toward one another. This is easy to see in the sexual organs of man and woman. They were made by the Creator for the other partner. For this reason, sexual contact can only be well and satisfactorily experienced within marriage. Anything done outside of marriage causes problems.

The Bible and Masturbation

Masturbation is not literally mentioned in the Bible. Nonetheless, several clear foundations are to be found. These are shown in a few verses which will be explained briefly. Before I mention these verses, however, I would like to discuss Genesis 38 verses 6-10 with you. I’ll do this in detail, since there are many misunderstandings concerning the relevance of this section.

“And Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And Er, Judah’s firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him. And Judah said unto Onan, Go in unto thy brother’s wife, and marry her, and raise up seed to thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in unto his brother’s wife, that he spilled it on the ground, lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the LORD: wherefore he slew him also.”

These verses are sometimes mentioned in connection with masturbation. But these verses are not describing masturbation. It is much more the story of a man who ignored his responsibilities toward marrying his next-of-kin. This next-of-kin marriage is a requirement according to the Law of Moses (Deuteronomy 25:5-10). But here in Genesis 38, we see that the practice was already common and accepted as an obligation.

God punished Onan with death; not because he let his seed spill on the ground, but because he intentionally withdrew himself from his responsibility, i.e. to perpetuate the name of his brother. If this passage were concerning masturbation, it would be easy to think that masturbation is a sin unto death (1st John 5:16), a sin where God's wrath would be immediately poured out. Fortunately, this is not the case. It is a sin. It causes self-dependence. But it is not a sin unto death.

Honest examination

It is something to dispose of. Perhaps you are not in agreement with me in this. In that case, I hope that the verses which I'd like to go over with you will bring you to another conclusion. I speak to you as Christians.

First of all, I assume that I can address you using God's Word. I also assume that you wish to obey God's Word out of love for the Lord Jesus, even when discussing issues not literally mentioned in the Bible, such as masturbation. In order to examine the issues using Bible verses, you must be prepared to subject your passions to the Bible. Only then can we truthfully consider together what these verses are saying.

I must also say that you are living in a world where people say that you must give free reign to nature; masturbation must even be stimulated. This is being told to students in many schools. Penelope Leach, an English expert in the field of upbringing,

caused distress in an audience after saying: “the problem with sexual upbringing is that children aren’t being told that sex is fun. And isn’t that the whole point?” God’s Word does not say that. When these sexual feelings awake in boys and girls, they shouldn’t cause distress and they shouldn’t be suppressed out of shame. One has to learn how to deal with them, one must be in control of them.

Within God’s limits

Sexuality has a purpose, but within marriage. In James 1:17, we read: *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights...”*. This includes sexuality. God gives the framework for the proper usage of this gift. When God limits the framework for the enjoyment of a gift, He doesn’t do it to make you unhappy. The devil wants you to believe that God limits your freedom of behavior so that He can control you and slow your development. This is his old, ever-repeating lie. This is how he reached Eve in Paradise. He drew her attention to the limits that God had set and thus deceived her. She wasn’t supposed to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. When she succumbed to the whisperings of Satan, despite God’s clear commandment, it meant the beginning of all the trouble which all mankind has since then sunken into. And these are the same old, treacherous lies which Satan wants to whisper in our ears, now using the subject of sexuality.

Are you familiar with these questions: If God is love, He surely wouldn’t expect you to torture yourself in waiting to have sex before you are married? Surely He considers pre-marital sex to be a good thing? He wouldn’t mind if somebody who is lonely masturbates? No, God gives us these limitations because He is thinking of our own happiness. He has set these limits because He wants you to completely enjoy His gift. Whoever enjoys this

gift outside of the limits will have to suffer the consequences. Many young people have said that overstepping the limits of sexuality has made them utterly unhappy.

The Conscience

And now for the Bible verses. The first verses address the conscience. Acts 24:16: *“And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.”*

2nd Corinthians 1:12: *“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity... we have had our conversation in the world”*

Ask yourself this: can I permit myself to masturbate without violating my conscience? Do I then have a pure conscience?

Fantasies

Another text in Matthew 5:28, where the Lord says, *“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* This concerns the world of thought. The question you can ask yourself is: can I masturbate without the “help” of sexual fantasies?

Dependency

The next verse is 1st Corinthians 6:12: *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”* This verse concerns your body and how you handle it. The question is: am I the master of my body or is my body my master? Masturbation

can cause dependency. There are enough young people who cannot free themselves from it.

Out of Faith

What do you think of Romans 14:23: *"for whatsoever is not of faith is sin."*? Do you think that masturbation is given to you through faith, that is, because of your relationship with God?

To the Glory of God

In 1st Corinthians 10:31 we read: *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* It is not difficult to find the question here. To ask the question means to answer it.

Self-discipline

The last verse I want to mention is from 1st Corinthians 9:24-27: *"Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."*

These verses are talking about self-control and self-discipline. Self-control belongs to the fruit of the Spirit, mentioned in Galatians 5:22. In order to control your body so that nothing controls you (see the citation from 1st Corinthians 6:12), you need self-control. You can't get that without hard training and

constant wrestling. But the Holy Spirit will give you strength to win. There are surely more verses which can help you to orient you in self-control. It is most valuable if you find the Bible verses yourself.

Possible direct consequences of masturbation

Masturbation is no guiltless activity. This is proven not only by biblical standards, but from practical experience as well. There are results which are noticeable immediately after masturbation and there are consequences which become evident only after a long term of practical experience. A few are listed here:

- Feelings of guilt: Inside yourself, you know that you are doing something which isn't right. Even supporters of masturbation speak of guilty feelings.
- Feelings of inferiority: When once again your feelings take control of you and you are unable to resist the temptation and engage in the act, you feel afterwards like a worthless boy or girl.
- Poor relationship to God: Is there anyone who claims that it helps improve your relationship with God? Masturbation does not bring you closer to God. Your desire to know Him better isn't strengthened.
- Difficult addiction to get over: The more often you engage yourself in this, the stronger the addiction to it becomes. It takes much time and effort to free yourself from something which you have become addicted to.
- Tension: Whoever engages in masturbation puts himself in the limelight. The result could be that he or she might not be able to get along with others in the same house or in school. This can lead to tense situations.

Possible future consequences

- Ego-centered sexuality can only be later transformed into a partner-oriented sexuality with great difficulty. In marriage, the point is not to give pleasure to yourself but to your partner. The result is: sexual relationship problems in marriage.
- Whoever hasn't learned to control his sexual feelings before marriage will have problems in self-control after marriage as well. There are always times in marriage when sex with your husband or wife isn't possible. This can be the case during sickness or when the husband is away on business for a long time. There are also many other circumstances where sex isn't possible.

Petting

Another subject associated with masturbation is “petting”. The word sounds innocent in itself, but in sexual context it has a differing meaning. Petting in the sexual sense means to excite the genital organs of the partner until climax is achieved. It is a kind of communal masturbation, masturbation for two as a replacement for normal sex, to arouse sexual pleasure without the risk of pregnancy. You don't have to check the calendar or use contraceptives. The association between petting and masturbation is made clear by the fact that many girls masturbate after petting. The girl wants to awaken the feelings herself which her boyfriend stimulated just before. Petting is rationalized by saying that it isn't sex and therefore is allowed. But this is a sad deception. Much of the beauty of marriage is lost through petting. Which man, after having touched another woman, can approach his wife with the same feelings of wonder, respect and joy as if he had remained pure and saved his body and sexual desire for her alone? And which man could enjoy his wife's body if he knows that it has been touched by

another and that this other has awakened her desires through petting? If petting takes place between boys and girls, the result will be that things having to do with sex begin to completely control the thinking process. Because of that, many beautiful things in life, in school or at work, are no longer any fun. It's hardly possible to talk about anything else.

The only rule

God has assigned complete freedom for petting and touching to marriage alone because these are expressions of a sexual relationship (I don't mean that you couldn't hold hands or kiss, but I will come back to that). The aforementioned Elisabeth Elliot wrote in her book that Christians have only one rule: complete abstinence from sexual activity outside of wedlock and absolute loyalty within marriage. What she says is mentioned with a positive tone in the Bible in Proverbs 5, verses 18 and 19: *"Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love."* In a negative tone, however, Ezekiel 23 states: *"And they committed whoredoms in Egypt; they committed whoredoms in their youth: there were their breasts pressed, and there they bruised the teats of their virginity" (verse 3); "Neither left she her whoredoms brought from Egypt: for in her youth they lay with her, and they bruised the breasts of her virginity, and poured their whoredom upon her" (verse 8); "Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats by the Egyptians for the paps of thy youth" (verse 23).* These verses show how God, who compares the relationship between Himself and His people to a marriage, is displeased when they pay no heed to Him and let themselves be fondled by strangers. Fondling and touching, even the breasts, belongs only to marriage, not outside. Then,

and only then, can you completely enjoy the body of your partner.

Modesty

That's why the relationship between young people shouldn't deteriorate to petting, because this is a sin. There is only one single solution for this problem: righteous confession and breaking of the sin. This kind of handling is not true love towards your future partner, whoever he or she may be. There is no true love if there are no restrictions in bodily relations, without being unified in the bond of marriage, where everything can be seen and touched. Taking off your clothes and seeing the naked body bears a kind of arousal: it is the beginning of a sexual relationship. The Bible never mentions exposing the naked body as being a matter of personal responsibility. It is either a part of a marriage relationship or fornication. Even showing and touching breasts outside of marriage is fornication as we have seen in Ezekiel 23, because it belongs to sexual intercourse. The breasts and especially the nipples of a woman can be more sensitive than her genital organs. Therefore, it's nonsense to say "nothing under the belt", meaning that it's alright to fondle the breasts. It's important enough to restate that modesty concerning the breasts is becoming less and less. Every year, more women and girl show their bear breasts at the beach in the summer months. There may be Christians who say that they can be in this environment without letting themselves be bothered by it, but this shows how weak feelings of modesty have become! To the shame of such Christians, it may be said that in this sex-driven world in which we live, the publishers of pornographic magazines know more about this kind of thing than those who claim to know the Bible. The same is true for advertisements. With ever-less modesty, naked bodies and sexuality are used to make a person buy a product. Whether you want to accept this or not, this insistent world of

advertisement brings you into contact with such things. Christians must follow a course of their own in the world. This course can only be reliably set using God's Word.

Just a part

Sexuality is only a part of life, also of conscious Christian life. This should be clear to all of us. A booklet like this one, discussing sexuality, may lead a person to forget that there are other more important things. Surveys have shown that out of 100 hours, married couples have 1 to 1.5 hours of sex on average. 98 hours remain for doing other things. Life isn't just made up of sex, even if many young people (old ones, too) don't seem to think of anything else. In school and at work, you can hear how popular talking about sex is. This illustrates the importance of this booklet. Through it, I want to help you to think, speak and act about sex in a biblical manner. You don't have to go along with the sex-possession present in society. You won't want to when you see what God has planned for you.

Christ and the Assembly

You realize what God had planned for sexuality in the verse quoted in the beginning of this booklet, especially the verses from Ephesians 5. This realization allows you to establish a good application. In Ephesians 5, the relationship between Christ and the Assembly is shown as a pattern to be followed for every facet of the relationship between husband and wife. What we find here are God's Thoughts as He created Man and Woman and when He legitimized marriage, where sexuality can ultimately unfold. This is also why Ephesians 5 refers to Genesis 2:24. The beginning of God-given marriage is found here. Even the Lord Jesus makes reference to this passage when He was on earth. We see this from Matthew 19, which I

mentioned in the beginning. He cites Genesis 2 when the leaders of the Jewish people came to Him with the question of divorce. In His speech, He goes back to what God had given in the beginning and concludes that divorce is something impossible. Only in the case of fornication from one of the two partners does the possibility (not right or duty) of divorce exist, says the Lord. And when Paul quotes Genesis 2, he does this, lead by the Spirit of God, to clarify on the Mystery of Christ and the Assembly. It's clear that Genesis 2:24 plays a decisive role concerning marriage in both parts of the Bible. From this, it is also clear that the Old Testament, the four Gospels and the entire New Testament bear the same witness concerning marriage.

Premarital and extramarital relationships

I would like to go through a few verses with you which show the particularities of marriage.

Leaving and cleaving: one flesh

It is appropriate to start with Genesis 2:24, that's why I'll re-quote it: *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”* It will be necessary to observe this passage more closely, because it holds foundations which are important when thinking about marriage. I want to emphasize the sequence of this verse to you. Here is a man who, 1) leaves his father and mother, 2) cleaves to his wife and 3) become one flesh with her.

Leaving

What does “leaving” really mean? I think that it begins when someone experiences real love (not just “liking”) for someone, someone where he can say: this is my future wife; I want to live together with this woman. This is the beginning of leaving the parents. The man takes a step to the outside, leaving the old environment where his home was and where he spent his time. His thoughts and interests concentrate on something new, on the creation of a new cell within society. All of a sudden, all of his thoughts and actions are trying to reach this goal. His life now has a completely new focus: no longer the situation with the parents at home, but the family and home he is trying to found. In all of his future plans, he must reckon with these thoughts. He begins to loosen himself from his parents and must continue by leaving them. This departure is a process which begins the moment he is convinced that he has found his future wife. The last moment of departure is the wedding day. With this, he closes the door of his parent’s home behind him and opens the door for the beginning of a new family. The latter is expressed in the following term.

Cleaving

“Cleave unto his wife” refers to the wedding. This is the moment where everyone can witness a man and a woman going through life as a new unity. Marriage is always a public event in God’s Word. Everyone is made aware that this man and woman will go together and inseparable through life starting from the wedding day. This is the meaning of “cleaving” or, using another word, “sticking”. This is how tightly and insolubly bound they are.

Married vs. just living together

If you consider the principles of a public wedding, a matter concerning the whole society, then living together in any form without being married is completely unimaginable. This kind of living together is not “cleaving”, it is a loose connection. Even a contract which regulates living together doesn’t change anything. Marriage is a vow taken in the presence of somebody who wants to hear it. In some places, a government representative, sometimes a member of city hall, performs the wedding. I will come back to this subject. Not only are the rights of marriage expressed, but also its responsibilities.

These days, there is nothing so strange about a pair living together, not in marriage, but within a “partner contract” arrangement. These contract regulates things which a pair has agreed on. Marriage, however, is an all-encompassing bond. There is no passage in the Bible that even remotely indicates another form of living together other than marriage. Unwedded living together is granted no allowance from the Bible. When the Bible is read without bias or prejudice, it’s great witness on marriage cannot be missed. Consider, also, that the relationship between Christ and the Assembly is put at risk when unwedded living together is seen as an accepted lifestyle. The marriage of man and woman is a picture of that which will occur between Christ and the Assembly. For example, take Revelation 19. We read here about the Wedding of the Lamb: *“Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb”* (verses 7 & 9).

The marriage of Christ and the Assembly takes place here. This is also shown to be a public occasion in the passage. It is a meal with many invitees. In the Bible, meals take a central position at many weddings. Relations and friends are invited. This accentuates the public character of the marriage and allows many to take part in the joy of the marriage couple. Isn’t

it interesting that in nearly every culture, marriage is a social event?

Only a formality?

I must add here, that it is becoming increasingly common in some places to view marriage as being just a formality. This opinion shows what people think about the official confirmation of marriage. In many countries of the western world, it is common to confirm a marriage in front of a representative of city hall. The official character of marriage is confirmed through this. This manner of practice is thoroughly in accordance with God's Word, since it concerns officiating the new state. Unfortunately, the government is increasingly distancing itself from these events. Should it ever come to pass that the government no longer is interested in performing marriages, the Bible still indicates to us that a marriage should be performed in front of witnesses. It would be reasonable that these witnesses could be Christians from the assembly where you belong to. The wedding vow could be taken in the presence of older bretheren and anybody else who wants to and can be there. And, speaking honestly, who would want to hide their dream husband or wife, given from the Lord, from anybody? Everybody can and should know that you belong to him or her. Surely you wouldn't to do anything but share that with everybody?

One flesh

When the time has come that the marriage has been performed, then -and only then- does the crowning moment, "becoming one flesh", take place. The newly formed unity is made complete. This means that the last piece of the verse, sexual intercourse, takes place. Let us not forget that it is not

independent. It can't be had by itself. It cannot be separated from the previous pieces and also not be experienced in a different chronological order. It is the expression of complete unity, ripened through "leaving" and officiated through "cleaving", i.e. in marriage. This unity is expressed and glorified through sexual intercourse. What's important (I reemphasize) is that *complete* unity is expressed. At this point, I would like to refer to 1st Corinthians 6:16 to emphasize this: "*What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body.*" As you can see, this verse speaks of "one body" and not "one flesh". With a harlot, only the body is of interest, nothing else. You cannot create complete unity with someone like that. One could almost call this kind of sexual togetherness without spiritual contact animalistic. In marriage, you create a unity of soul, spirit and body with your partner. Everything is shared: home and time, money, bed, interests, emotions, body, children, future, everything really. And the bodily "being one flesh" is an expression of that. If you take this on yourself, then you will realize that unmarried living together could not possibly be living as God wills, desires or allows.

The two

Matthew 19:5 quotes Genesis 2:24; we've observed this already. Now I want to emphasize two words from this verse: "the two". These two little words show us two things. First, the word "the". This speaks of "man and woman" from verse 4, of whom the Lord is speaking. Therefore, there is no room for a male-male or female-female relationship. Sexuality is only allowed between a legitimate male-female relationship. Homosexuality or lesbian relationships are disallowed.

Second, the word "two" is mentioned. This word excludes the possibility of sexual relations with more than one partner, as is the case in communes. Anything which adds to what God's Word says here would bring unhappiness. Even if modern

forms of living together are advertised with great energy, they cannot mask the great unhappiness and dissatisfaction which exists among those who find themselves in such relationships. This doesn't mean that all marriages are happy marriages. However, Genesis 2 isn't speaking of how a relation is experienced, but of its form. Should you become aware now of something that you are currently going through or from your past which you haven't admitted, you can do so now. There is always a way back with God, a way to restoration from what was or is wrong.

Uncovering nakedness

After this detailed, if not complete, discussion of Genesis 2:24, I will continue with Leviticus 18. Since this concerns an entire chapter, I won't quote it here. You can read it for yourself. You will see that uncovering nakedness is shameful, different from marriage: it isn't allowed. (To avoid misunderstandings: this doesn't apply to nursing situations)

Love transformed into hate

Our next portion is in 2nd Samuel 13. We read here about the story of Amnon and his half-sister, Tamar. Amnon was madly in love with her. His feelings were so strong that he convinced Tamar, using an excuse which a friend had given him, to go to him and, after begging, go to bed with him. Tamar tried to get to change his mind (verses 1-13). *"Howbeit he would not hearken unto her voice: but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her"* (verse 14).

Now he had gotten what he wanted. But was he satisfied? It's horrible to read what happens now: *"Then Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was*

greater than the love wherewith he had loved her. And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone” (verse 15).

This story teaches us two things: first, the strength of sexual desire. It's an unstoppable power for somebody who hasn't learned to control himself. This power is irresistible to those who haven't placed themselves under the rules in God's Word. The second thing we see is that love turns to hate when it has succumbed to lust. These two lessons from this story repeat themselves daily in the lives of (young) people who act like Amnon. They use sex as if it were to be had by itself. Often, men who have seduced girls develop an aversion to them. Just as often, girls consent to this behavior, which was not the case with Tamar. Tamar realized that it would have been very shameful to be sent away by Amnon when he raped her, as terrible as it may be. If he had at least been a guy with some self-respect, he would have married her, but he did nothing of the sort. Although forbidden sexual partnership really isn't the same as rape, we can still come to an important conclusion from this story of Amnon and Tamar. The conclusion is that unlawful sexual intercourse isn't a sin you commit which you can just quickly admit to and then everything is ok. A very intimate unity between two people has taken place. I'm not saying that marriage is always the solution. I've already mentioned the difference between "one flesh" and "one body". However, it would be going to far if I were to say that there are no responsibilities involved. Every case is different, and you would need to openly consider the case with the Lord and with each other to make the right decision.

Result of sin

A single action as the result of unbridled passion brings on an ocean of wretchedness: Tamar is dishonored, her family is disgraced. Hate takes control and after some time, murder occurs. It's a sad repetition of what Amnon's father, king David,

had done. We read about this two chapters back. He also let himself be controlled by his passion as he observed Bathsheba while she was bathing. He let her come to him and had sexual intercourse with her although she was married. When he is told that she was pregnant, he tried to hide his act. But he fails. He has no other choice: he lets Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, fall in battle. In reality, this was murder. Kind David was a murderer.

How much destitution has come out of forbidden sexual intercourse, be it before or outside of marriage! I hope that you allow yourself to be influenced by these clear biblical examples.

Adultery and fornication

The Book of Proverbs also contains clear warnings: *"But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away. For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts"*(Proverbs 6:32-35; read also chapter 7). Purity in marriage and the evils which you allow to come upon your wife are presented here to the reader.

Another passage which allows no doubt for what God thinks about premarital and extra-marital relations: *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."* Marriage is something which must be revered, valued as a gift of God. It should be honored. Marriage can only be honored when it is respected and treated as such. Exceptions cannot be made for anyone. It is honorable *in all (or from all)*.

The word "bed" can also be translated to "marital living". Marital living or "the bed" is stained through adultery, forbidden sexual contact with anyone other than the wife or husband. Adultery is

a form of fornication, but fornication contains more than just adultery. Fornication (whoremongery) is often the general term for all kinds of lewdness which unmarried persons sexually act out with others.

How far can one go?

Can't a love-couple do anything together? Can't they even touch each other? From what we've seen already, a few things should be clear. Cuddling has its limits. It is important to realize the limits presented in God's Word about cuddling and to hold on to them together. Know that sexuality is a great force which must be kept under control. In order to keep sexuality in its rightful, biblical place during the engagement period, I would like to present the following Bible verses to you. Some of them I've mentioned already, others are new. Please remember them well.

Not naked together

Read Leviticus 18. This clearly tells us not to expose nakedness and not to see one another naked. This is only allowed in marriage.

And Ezekiel 23:8 & 21. These are unmistakable verses which tell us not to fondle the breasts. This is also only allowed in marriage.

Lust

James 1:14 & 15: *"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished,*

bringeth forth death.” We could apply this verse to fondling. Never allow it to go so far that you feel lust. If your passion takes over, you will go too far. You will quickly reach the point of no return.

I’ve already said that sexuality is an enormous power within us which we shouldn’t allow to come into play. That’s why I give you this advice: Stay away from places which appeal to passion and where there’s an atmosphere that feeds to your desire.

The Will of God

The next two verses, from 1st Thessalonians 4 and 1st Corinthians 6 deal directly with marriage, although they also give clear instructions on how unmarried people should behave. 1st Thessalonians 4:3-5 speaks in easy language: *“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 honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.”* Sanctification and honor of the body (the “vessel” speaks of the body) concerning marriage are the principle subjects here. If you may not misuse your body for forbidden sexual lust in marriage, how much more is this the case before or outside of marriage?

The Holy Spirit vs. fornication

In 1st Thessalonians 4:8, we find another strong argument against living out sexual lust outside of marriage. *“He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit.”* Whoever lives out his sexual lusts without restraint with another person doesn’t just show disrespect for that person, but also for God Himself. He has given us sexual feelings as well as the limits which apply to

these feelings. We should also note that God has also given us His Holy Spirit. This means that God lives in us through His Spirit. How could we then allow ourselves to be swept away by our lusts? Isn't it interesting that the Holy Spirit is named after mentioning fornication in 1st Corinthians 6? "*Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*" (verses 18 & 19).

As already mentioned, the word for "fornication" can be translated to "lewdness". This included all kinds of sexuality outside of marriage. Thus, when an engaged couple have sex, they commit fornication or lewd acts.

Wait

Song of Solomon 2:7 gives more instructions to (young) people who are waiting to get married: "*I charge you... that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.*" We can apply this with the following: await arousing your sexual feelings until the time has come, i.e. wait until you are married.

Stop

Stop cuddling when you feel your passion is aroused, when you feel like you want more, when you want to go further. You should also stop out of respect for the other person when you notice that your partner is beginning to feel uncomfortable. In any case you should confess your guilt to each other if your being together is bound by negative memories. Usually the man is the guilty one. Men are sexually aroused much faster. For a girl, the sense of security and being with someone is more important. When a girl wants that, a boy often understands it as

her being ready to go to bed with him and uses this to his advantage. Speaking of statistics, an American study has shown that 25% of Christian young people under 16 years of age have had sex. Therefore, we are not talking about exceptions.

Battle

We live in a world which doesn't care about God's Will. We find this in the Bible as well. It takes a battle to prevent ourselves from being drawn into the influences of the world, just as there are battles in many other parts of life. This battle is more difficult when we see that so many young Christians no longer deal conservatively with sexuality. Added to that is the fact that the world has a strong coalition with our flesh in us. Hence, whoever wants to walk the Way of the Lord must be prepared for battle! Whoever wants to obey God's Word can count on God's help and support for this battle.

Victory over sin

I'd like to list a few more verses which can help you in overcoming sin.

Confess and depart from sin

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long... I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:3-5).

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Proverbs 28:13).

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1st John 1:9).

For all those people who have not kept themselves pure: you can begin anew. There is, however, one prerequisite: confession. I'm not saying that possible consequences of sin will disappear. That is not the case. However, after confessing, a new beginning with the Lord can take place and we can count on His strength to carry the consequences of our wrongful ways. It must be a deep-felt confession without trying to make excuses for sin, that is, not trying to blame the sin on your environment or on people you thought would make everything turn out so nicely.

Admitting sins cleanses and frees the way again, despite miserable experiences which someone may have made and despite all the things which confront him daily as a result of sin.

Thought process

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2nd Corinthians 10:5).

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2).

It has been said that our most important sexual organ is our head, our brain. If something in our sexual lives is abnormal, then something with our thoughts must not be in order (with a few exceptions). This is the reason why we must learn to control and renew our thoughts. We are often subject to brain washing through all the things we see, hear and read around us without realizing it. Our standards are slowly equalized to the

standards of the world and we forget what God's Word tells us about important things like sexuality. I say "important" because these are things that can make and break a person's life. Many marriages have gone to pieces because the persons involved knew each other only through their sexuality in the beginning phases. Many people look at love only as being sexual activity. This is why many of us, sometimes through shame and disgrace, must reorient ourselves towards sexuality on a biblical basis.

Memorizing

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:9 & 11).

It is of utmost importance to occupy your thoughts with Bible verses. Memorizing Bible verses purifies your thoughts and keeps them clean. And when the Devil tries to bring us into temptation, he can only be kept at bay with God's Word. We must also learn to control something else: our eyes. The following passages underline this.

Controlling the eyes

"Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." (Proverbs 27:20)

"the eye is not satisfied with seeing..." (Ecclesiastes 1:8)

"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?" (Job 31:1)

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”
(Matthew 5:28)

Don't watch bad films. Walk by any sex shop without looking in the windows. Rip up or burn bad pictures or films so that you can't be tempted to look at them. Don't be shy because of the price you once paid. Don't bring home bad magazines and in case there are some at home, destroy them! Even if there are no pictures in the magazine, the description can be so vivid that you can picture it very well in your mind. Be radical: you can spare yourself so much trouble of conscience. This is about your soul. Didn't sin come into the world through the eyes? Satan managed to make Eve look at the tree which God had so clearly instructed on (Genesis 2:17). He whispered into her ear (using my own words): “Eve, why don't you have a look at that tree. Doesn't it look good?” And Eve looked at it and saw it. It was exactly as the Devil had described to her. She forgot what God had said. We read the results in Genesis 3:6: *“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”* Like I said already, the results were fatal and still have their effects today and as long as people are being born. John writes in 1st John 2:16 about *“all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.”* The lust of the eyes is one of the elements which characterize the world. Therefore, we must like Job make a covenant with our eyes so that we don't see evil things.

Planning time

The next point concerns how we plan our time. We need to occupy our time with good and responsible activities. David failed in this once after ignoring his duties.

“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.” (2nd Samuel 11:1-5)

David committed fornication with Bathsheba when everything was wonderfully quiet at home while the kings had gone out to make war. He had made himself very comfortable. And then he sees beautiful Bathsheba, sends for her and has intercourse with her. But then, when Bathsheba has become pregnant, David has a problem. He then makes the problem bigger in that he tries to hide his sin. The chronology from 2nd Samuel 11 shows how David commits sin after sin and how he turns into a hypocrite, liar, and to end it all, a murderer. Sin never comes alone. It builds a chain which can only be broken by true confession and real ceasing of sin. If you leave a door open for the Devil, he will use it to continue his work. He then takes hold of the next part of your life and the next, until he has turned a person into a wreck. God allows this story of David's to be starkly written to show the reader how far he can go if he ignores his responsibilities. Many young people take part in wrongful acts, sexual included, when they are alone and have nothing to do. So seek occupation and avoid being alone if there is danger of being overwhelmed by sexual urges. Some good solutions: a sensible hobby, sport activities, a good relationship with a friend with whom you can openly speak

about things. Another good thing would be some very physical activity. You might try visiting elderly singles or passing out tracts to bring people to the Gospel. At any rate, it is good to visit the assemblies of believers. Be creative and active!

Flee

There are situations where it's just a good idea to flee. This isn't cowardice, but proving your knowledge of self.

"Flee also youthful lusts" (2nd Timothy 2:22)

"Flee fornication" (1st Corinthians 6:18)

"And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out." (Genesis 39:12)

Joseph is a wonderful example for how we should act in such a difficult situation. He was a slave in the house of a respected Egyptian. He must have been a handsome man, because the wife of this Egyptian wanted to be "in bed" with him. However, Joseph decidedly refuses this and says: *"how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Genesis 39:9). But the wife of Potiphar, the respected Egyptian, doesn't give up after only one try. Verse 10 says: *"And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her."* She had no other choice but to grab him and force him to have intercourse with her. How awful must this have been for Joseph! He was alone in the house, she was the wife of his master and he was a young man with feelings. Many others had given in with much less temptation, but not Joseph. He was a young man who feared God. That gave him the strength to flee. No one can withstand sexual temptation after coming so close to it except by fleeing. He who then flees shows that he has self understanding. And such a person remains intact with his relationship to God. This is much

more valuable than the short-lived enjoyment of sin, whose bitter after-taste you can't get rid of.

Joseph couldn't prevent being in this situation. The same could happen to us. The only thing is that we are responsible for avoiding such situations, wherein real temptation awaits.

Fleshly lusts

“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul...” (1st Peter 2:11).

One of the “fleshly lusts” is sexuality. These lusts are often addressed in many places. You can consider the many meeting places for young people or on the streets of a city known as the “red-light district”. Stay away from there! Don't even go “just to check it out”. Curiosity has led many people into misery.

Prayer

You can find protection in God's Holiness. We can go there when we pray. *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16).

Some good advice for young people: whenever you come together, pray first. Reading the Bible together is also very important. Prayer and reading the Bible brings us to the presence of God. Temptation has a much lesser chance of getting through. Fellowship with the Lord protects us from sin. Being conscious of our weakness, we can take our refuge before the Throne of Grace. God is the God of all grace. Grace means not expecting anything from yourself but from God. Whoever lives in this manner will find help in the Lord at the right moment. In prayer, we can reach God's Holiness, the only

place where we are secure. Sin has no access here. Whether old or young, this is the place where we should be.

Clothing

It is also important to pay attention to how we dress ourselves. This is true for both genders, but the Bible shows us that clothing is a point of weakness especially for women and girls.

“In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety” (1st Timothy 2:9). It can be very easy to arouse the opposite sex: a long skirt with a long slit, a very short skirt, a blouse with one too many buttons opened or a very low-cut sweater. Tight or see-through clothing shows more body than is appropriate for Christian ladies. Many young men have allowed their fantasies to run wild by looking at a woman’s arousing clothing and have acted out very wicked sexual acts. Of course, that’s no excuse for the young man, but which Christian lady would want to be the cause? Therefore, pay attention to what you wear!

Self-control

The Holy Spirit wants to give us the power to resist temptation, which can often quickly occur.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is temperance” (Galations 5:22).

We, as fruit of the Spirit, must learn to control ourselves. If the Holy Spirit can lead our lives and fill our hearts, we will be able to maintain God’s standards without too much exertion.

A heart-felt decision

To conclude, we need to agree to practice out everything what was said. We can learn something from Daniel about this.

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank... Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” (Daniel 1:8-9)

Daniel was still young when he was led as a prisoner of war from Israel to Babylon. Far away from everything having to do with God and serving God, he could have easily made compromises because of his situation. Could he do anything about his being in Babylon? And yet, he didn't chose to take part in the Babylonian customs. He was well determined to not do anything which went against what he had learned in God's Word. And God rewarded that determination.

In Acts 11, we read about Barnabas, who encouraged the believers in Antioch *“that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”* Barnabas encouraged those believers to do exactly what Daniel had done. With all my heart, I hope that you chose to accept this advice.

Perhaps you completely agree with everything that I've written. Nonetheless, it won't help if you don't choose in your heart to make an earnest beginning. You can now say: I don't want to deal with sexuality in an unbiblical way. We've seen that God gives us many aids to succeed. But we need to use these aids. Purpose in your heart and make it your goal to keep your life and your body pure. Then you will receive God's many blessings.

Conclusion

The only possible way to stay pure or be restored after failure is stated in the Bible. Happily, it is always possible to restart.

Nobody is left on his own with the Lord. He knows how you are. He says to Peter after he, although he meant well, was unable to keep watch with the Lord, "*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Matthew 26:41). We can always trust the Lord knows how weak we are. "*For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust*" (Psalm 103:14). We can always go to Him and say, "Lord, I've failed once again." This is an experience made by many young people. I've made the same experience in my own life. I'm not talking about things which I'm unfamiliar with! And even if I haven't lived through all the things I've written about, they are still in my heart. I thank God for His grace that He kept me from many forms of sexual sins. But we can help each other to conquer sin. We must also make sure that things stay the way they are wherever things are still in order. Whoever is walking the right path must be encouraged to stay on it. The Lord wants to be glorified in our lives. This will be the case if we give up our lives to Him from the beginning, rather than always failing. Repeated failure is not honorable to God and just as dishonorable to ourselves. Of course, His grace grows through this, but this is also the case when you live your life in submission to Him.

Whoever repeatedly makes mistakes, though definitely having decided not to fall into sexual sin anymore, can find the only true path to freedom in God's Word and in God's Son. "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*". "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*" (John 8:32 & 36). The Devil always tries to bring you into doubt, so that you give up on everything. He whispers in your ear, "it won't work. You will never be able to be free." Remember that we don't ask God for forgiveness for nothing. Something which I find very beautiful is what the Lord Jesus says about forgiveness in Matthew 18:22 after Peter asks him, "*Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?*" (verse 21). And notice what the Lord then says. "*I say not unto thee, until seven*

times: but, until seventy times seven.”_What I find so beautiful is that the Lord says we must forgive our brother when he sins against us, no matter how many times it happens. Would He Himself send us away if we came to him again and again? Of course, this must be done with true regret, otherwise He cannot forgive us. But this is normally the case when we lie panting on the floor, when everything has gone bad. And then we can come to Him; He tells us so. Let us then go to our Father and tell Him everything. Let us say, “here I am, again.” He will accept us and forgive us. And when we have done things that carry consequences we cannot avoid (there are such things), He will help us to carry them. What a Father is He!

Invitation

I can imagine that you may still have many questions and/or comments concerning these subjects. Or perhaps you need an explanation and want to know how to apply something written here to your own personal life. I would be happy to speak with you. You can call me or write to me under the following address:

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A word to older readers

Please allow me to address these few words to the older generation. At 52 years, I myself stand between two generations. Perhaps you are not so happy about the fact that this subject was discussed so open-heartedly. Nonetheless, I hope that you can show understanding for the fact that young people in our times are exposed to this subject in all sorts of ways. And not always in the most elegant manner. I can understand very well if you were taught these things in a different manner (if at all!). In the past, these things were never talked about by name. I also agree that the reaction to things visible today is exaggerated. There are no more taboos; everything must be talked about openly and shamelessly. That's going too far. This is especially the reason why we must explain what God says in His Word about this in an understandable way.

I hope that you could notice what my concern was in writing this booklet. Many young people don't realize what the Bible says about these things. If we really listen to them and get to know their backgrounds, we can't really blame them. My plea is: don't judge too harshly. You could see without a doubt that my point was not to call evil good. Anything which contradicts God's Word is sin and that's what I have written. And if these things concern young people which take part in the breaking of bread and continue in sin, then surely the assembly must apply discipline. But is harsh judgement appropriate in cases where the person concerned acted in ignorance? If we know ourselves well, then we will try to reach out to them and help them to thus view and experience their sexuality in the manner which God has in store. And not only that. It would be wonderful if we could approach those helpless cases, to stand by them and help them to come out of their misery. This booklet is therefore also meant to settle a debt which lies on us, the elders.

A young woman told me once of how she came to taking refuge in the Lord Jesus. She was in a hopeless situation. Chronically

depressive, her marriage was in deep crisis. At first she took refuge in occultism. Of course, this didn't offer her the solution she was looking for. On the contrary, her problems became worse. She was then visited by a young Christian lady and told her the whole story. This Christian was so affected by her situation that she was moved to tears because of her misery. This, she said, was the first time she noticed that someone cared for her. After the Christian lady told her about the Lord Jesus, she accepted Him as her Lord and Savior. It is my deep desire and, I hope, yours as well that we accept these lost and searching young people in mercy.