

Transcript-80

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions Podcast. If you've been listening, you've been noticing, hopefully that we've been going through the top 20 questions of all time on GotQuestions.org and we'll be covering another one of those today, and so this is right up there, definitely top five. So the question today we'll be discussing with Jeff and Kevin, our regulars is sex before marriage?

Shea Houdmann

What does the Bible say about premarital sex. Obviously this is a question that when most people look at it, they tend to think of it's something young people deal with. This is something that a youth pastor covers with teenagers. Well, it's not the case. I mean at Got Questions. We received questions from adults who have either been single their whole lives. They're in their thirties, 40s or 50s and are wondering this question. We received questions from people who are divorced and now dating. Like well I had sex with my husband for 30 years. What's the big deal now? I can't get pregnant, blah blah blah. So it's not just a question that young people struggle with, but we want to discuss what the Bible says about sex before marriage, and cover some of the practical aspects of this of why does God place this restriction?

Shea Houdmann

But it's not just a legalistic thing, it's not God being a cosmic killjoy. No, there are very good reasons. In addition to honoring God with our bodies that we should not engage in sex outside of marriage, so I hope you'll find our conversation interesting and hopefully edifying. So Kevin, why don't you start us off? What does the Bible say about sex before marriage?

Kevin Stone

Well, the Bible is very clear that sex before marriage any type of sex outside of the marriage bond is a sin. Scripture says this in several places. What's rather disturbing is that so many Christians today will try to justify it and say that it's not a sin. Come up with all kinds of

rationalizations. Why you know in their situation it's OK. It's very common to find people in the church today who are living together. You know they're part of the church. They claim to be Christians. And yet they are living in sin is how we used to call it. You know we were living in sin, living together and enjoying the benefits of marriage without actually being married.

Kevin Stone

In fact, Pew Research Center had a fairly has a fairly recent survey. They did 2020, where the majority of Christians. People who self identify as Christian 57% say that sex between unmarried adults in a committed relationship is sometimes or always acceptable, so that's well over half. 57% of self professed Christians claim that premarital sex is OK.

Kevin Stone

And breaking that down further, they looked just at evangelical Protestants and among the evangelicals it was 46%. So almost half of the evangelicals said the same thing that premarital sex is always or sometimes acceptable.

Kevin Stone

This is disturbing because of what the Bible actually says. You know, the argument sometimes is that well. Bible says a lot about adultery, and everybody knows that adultery is wrong, but. You know this this word, fornication. You know it doesn't necessarily include premarital sex. You know between people who love each other. People who are committed to each other. Just because they don't have a marriage certificate you know doesn't mean that they're committing fornication. You know that fornication award is for other sexual sins.

Kevin Stone

Well, the Bible, I think in at least in a couple different places, is very clear that any type of sexual activity outside of marriage is immoral. The two passages that I have in mind. Are first of all, first Corinthians 7 and verse two, which says, but since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife and each woman with her own husband. So in that verse marriage is presented as the cure for immorality. Those two things

are contrasted so sexual union within the marriage is set against immorality. This very broad word. Thus any sex outside of marriage according to First Corinthians 7:2 is considered immoral. That would have to include premarital sex because it's not within the marriage bond.

Kevin Stone

The other passage, I think is very clear is Hebrews 13 in verse four, which says marriage should be honored by all. And the marriage bed kept pure. For God will judge the adulterer and all these sexually immoral. So here we have both adultery and fornication, the sexually immoral contrasted with what happens in the marriage bed. So. What happens in the marriage bed is honored by God. That is good and appropriate. It's God's design.

Kevin Stone

What happens outside the marriage bed? You know sexual activity outside of marriage is condemned as immoral in this passage. It's called that and it even says that God will judge that type of behavior so. I'm not sure why so many people in the church today seem to be accepting of this particular sin, saying it's OK. It's maybe that those parts of the Bible are outdated or whatever, but again, when you look at Scripture. The sexual immorality it falls in lists along with a whole lot of other sins. You know you can't just pick one out of that list and say that one is outdated and this sin is OK now it used to be bad, but now it's not it. It doesn't even make any sense to be picking and choosing out of the lists of sins that the Bible has. I think that we need to get back to scripture and stick to what the Bible says.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, exactly Kevin. And when I look at some of these passages in scripture, there's several different Greek words that are used to refer to sexual morality, but the most common one is actually the Greek word porneia, from which we get pornography. But in the biblical Greek, it means like any sort of sexual deviancy. Any sort of sexual immorality. It's a very generic, broad term.

Shea Houdmann

Well if it's sexual, deviancy is referring to, well, what is it deviating from? And so the Bible is very clear that the standard of sex between a husband and his wife in marriage. Is God's intention for sex, so any sort of porneia and you sort of deviates from that. That's when it turns into immorality.

Shea Houdmann

So the people who will make the argument, trust me, we've gotten the question many, many times. The Bible never specifically talks about sex before marriage. It talks about like you said, adultery talks about perversion, those sorts of things. But perversion of what? You have to have a standard in order for there to be a perversion of that standard and clearly the standard that God has set for us for sex is within marriage.

Jeff Laird

There's another issue that we run into where a lot of the things that we're talking about here we hear people within the church who are trying to brush away and excuse these things. And sometimes it's worth pointing out that all truth is God's truth, and for some people, that's a controversial statement. But it basically means. Reality is what reality is and when we do things that are contrary to reality, we see consequences. One of those areas that we see that is with issues like premarital sex, God's, intention for us was not to do those things and when we do we see some of the consequences of those. So even from a secular standpoint, we can see that there are risks associated with premarital sex. There's risks of unintended pregnancy. There's risks of sexually transmitted diseases. Causes a lot of hurt feelings, a lot of relationship issues, feelings of shame, feelings of regret. And it also is about an expectation.

Jeff Laird

A society that embraces premarital sex is one that doesn't treat each other and the human body as something that's sacred. It becomes a pressure. It becomes an expectation. It makes it easier for men to pressure women into certain things. Because there isn't this ground

level assumption that that's something that requires commitment that absolutely needs to come with that. It becomes something that's just casual and meaningless.

Jeff Laird

And it's not the kind of argument that's going to automatically sway anybody, but it's at least worth pointing out that if we had a society where we drastically reduced the prevalence of premarital sex, there are a lot of things that are difficult in our society that we would not be struggling with the way we are now. That would include. For example, things like sexually transmitted diseases. In a sense those exist because of premarital sex. If two persons have never had any contact with anyone or anything until they've been married, there's nothing there usually to create those issues. It certainly wouldn't be the kind of all encompassing problem than it is today.

Jeff Laird

Unintended pregnancies. It's difficult for women to be in that circumstance. Society puts all sorts of pressures on them, whether that's the abortion industry or whether that's the hardships of raising children. One of the reasons God intended sex for marriage is because that is precisely biologically what sex does. And that's what it's for. Engaging in premarital sex is a way of treating women in particular like their objects like, they're just there for a man's pleasure, and that's all they're there for. A healthy understanding of sex involves the idea that it's meant to be something more than just recreation.

Jeff Laird

And it's not to say it's not supposed to be recreational. There's a lot of places in the Bible to talk about the joy that men and women experience when sex is being used the right way, and in the right context. So I think when we're when we're taking a look at these things, we don't just have to try to rely on Greek wording and phrasing and stuff. Those are all there and they mean what they mean.

Jeff Laird

You can see that in scripture that when it talks about fornication, it's including all these different things. But we also have this particular issue is something that does stand out. We can see all of the problems that do come from that risk taking that happens. If we were to remove that from our culture, if we remove that from our behavior and our patterns, we would see a lot of benefits. So you really can't argue against the idea that there would be a lot of benefits personally and culturally, if we did not engage in premarital sex. All you can really do is just justify all of the shrapnel and the fallout as being worth it. In order for people to continue doing what they're doing.

Shea Houdmann

I love that point, Jeff. Just imagine a world where this was not occurring. And imagine all the benefits of the world. And I like your use of the word shrapnel of unintended damage. In a sense, it's not specifically a biblical argument, but it's a very practical argument. Very true argument of how much better the world would be if God's intent for sex within marriage was followed.

Shea Houdmann

And Kevin mentioned something earlier about how sex before marriage is increasingly being accepted by Christians. Even evangelical Christians. A friend told me a story that he had applied, actually he was serving as a pastor of a church, and he discovered that one of the young women serving on the worship team was living with her boyfriend. And he confronted her with someone along with him, of course. About I don't think it's appropriate for you to be serving on the worship team while you're living with your boyfriend and the firestorm they erupted at that church. And he said, basically the parents of this young woman who were very influential in the church, basically came to him and said, my daughter is more in love with her boyfriend than any married couple I've ever known. So who are you to say that their relationship is not just as good as a marriage and he was like. Uhm, oh God is the one saying that.

Shea Houdmann

The Bible makes it very clear and just as good of a marriage is not a scriptural concept. There's no, there's a very clear distinction in Scripture. You are either married or not married. If you're married, sex is wonderful. It is designed for pleasure. It is intended to be a thrilling, awesome, amazing aspect of marriage. If you're not married. It's sin. It's wrong. It's immoral. There's no in between.

Shea Houdmann

We get questions from people who are like I'm engaged. Is it OK to have sex now? Well, how many engaged couples we're as good as married? Is their logic well? How many good as married couples end up breaking up? And then you have the added pain of knowing you gave yourself fully to a person who you are no longer with.

Shea Houdmann

So there's the scripture is so clear on this. There's no reason Christians should be abandoning the biblical teaching on this issue. And as Jeff was talking about, it's not only what the Bible says or honoring God with our bodies in the way we view marriage and sex within marriage. It's the damage that's done to ourselves and to others by not following God's plan for sex within the confines of marriage.

Kevin Stone

I think what you were alluding to there Shea is that it really just comes down to are we going to obey God or are we going to go with what culture says is appropriate? Are we going to go with the flow here in this world? Are we going to take that course of action? Or are we going to just listen to what God says and trust His wisdom? Trust His goodness. And stick with what He has clearly said in His Word.

Kevin Stone

Now one of the excuses that I have heard, I don't know if you guys have heard this excuse before, but those commands against premarital sex in Scripture, sexuality before marriage was for that day and age when the Bible was written because back then people got

married very young. You know, so today people are getting married later in life and so its harder today. Its much more difficult. There's much more temptation today because we are waiting longer to be married. That argument sounds good on the face of it. Kinda sounds like it might work but isn't really just saying that basis of what is acceptable and not acceptable is really how hard it is to say no. You know. The amount of temptation is what dictates what is right and wrong. We don't want to go down that path because there's a whole lot of sins that are hard to say no to for some people. You know. Some people have a hard time with stealing things you know. Some people feel compelled to tell lies. You know so, should we say well that's acceptable for that person because its so hard for them to say no? Or do we go back to what scripture says and trust God's wisdom and trust His goodness.

Jeff Laird

I think it's also worth pointing out when you say that it's people would argue that it's hard. It's difficult to resist something like premarital sex. For me in the conversations that I've had with people, my response to something like that is to say. You're right, why? Why it's because as a culture, as a society we turn that into an expectation. We treat it like it's not that big of a deal.

Jeff Laird

There have been cultures in our history where things like public drunkenness or rampant drug abuse were not especially tempting to people because they were not something that society generally thought of as normal and healthy and good. That changed at least when it came to alcohol. And you can see that there were some. We've actually had more problems with alcohol after prohibition. For example, in the United States than we did beforehand. Because when people decided to start celebrating it then all of a sudden it just became a norm and it became a much greater temptation that you can see the same thing with premarital sex.

Jeff Laird

When we say you're right, it is very difficult. It is more difficult now than it would have been in other cultures. That doesn't mean that it's good, that's just another indictment of the

society that we're living in. I also think people need to remember that that there's, you know, God gives us these instructions for reasons we don't always necessarily understand them. We can pick out some pieces and parts of those. One of the ones that I see is that premarital sex really does cause issues within an eventual marriage. It does cause stress and problems within the marriage later on.

Jeff Laird

I've seen news articles, you know we're recording this podcast here in February of 2022, and I've seen articles talking about studies fairly recently in 2020-2021. They're finding out that there is a causal link between premarital sex and divorce, and they're using all the statistical methods they can to try to find out if there's some other factor that's involved and they just keep coming down to. That's one of the things that's a partial factor in predicting the breakup eventually of a marriage. I can understand reasons for that.

Jeff Laird

You're talking about causing comparisons between your spouse and somebody else that you've been with. Your spouse making comparisons between you and somebody else they've been with. Having frustrations about differences and insecurities. And there's just there's such a long list of things that brings in there that can cause those problems.

Jeff Laird

So God gives us these instructions, not just like I think, Shea you were saying not just to be a cosmic killjoy. Because it actually means something. It's a reflection of our understanding of his purpose for sex and his purpose for us. And if our culture doesn't have that right understanding, we're going to treat things like premarital sex like it's not a big deal. We're going to pressure people and push people into all these things that God never intended, and that's how we wind up with a lot of these consequences that we see. And they're not just societal, they're personal. And even in the best circumstances they can cause problems. Doesn't mean

that everything is going to be bad from that point forward, but it is something that we have to recognize creates risk in even a good relationship.

Kevin Stone

You know any discussion of this subject, I think really needs to include a focus on the forgiveness of God. This is a sin that a lot of people fall into. A lot of people deal with memories of this in their past. I love that Scripture presents Jesus as the one who saves us from our sin and forgives us from our sin. We have wonderful promises in Scripture, 1 John 1:9 comes to mind, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. One of the things I love about that verse it does not make any exceptions to any sin. All sins are covered. If we confess it He is faithful, He is just, He will forgive, He will cleanse. Then we have passages like Psalm 103 verse 12, as far as the East is from the West so far He has removed our transgressions from us. We may be able to dredge up those memories again. But from God's point of view those sins are gone. Those sins are covered by the blood of Christ. Those sins have been taken care of. We can start a new. We can trust God's goodness in His forgiveness, and we can move on from this day forward. The forgiveness we have in Christ is a beautiful thing.

Shea Houdmann

Yeah, I think earlier Jeff was mentioning this shrapnel the damage that's done and one thing we don't want to minimize is the emotional damage you can do to yourself by engaging in premarital sex and having that relationship broken because sex is the ultimate act of two becoming one flesh. There's a bond that occurs in sex, that doesn't occur in any other aspect of a human relationship, so that's another reason why it's intended to be marriage only because it draws two people closer together than any other physical act can.

Shea Houdmann

And then when that relationship is then broken, does more damage. It's always painful to break up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, but when sex has become part of the relationship, that breakup becomes even more damaging. Some people struggle with this for a lifetime.

Shea Houdmann

Guilt over it and like Kevin, is saying that's not something you have to struggle with. Forgiveness is available in Christ. But the regret the shame, the guilt, a lot of people really struggle with overcoming that in their Christian lives. Just from I really wish I had never done that. I can see what it did to me. I can see how like Jeff is saying it has made my marriage a little less than it could have been if we'd both saved ourselves for each other only. So just not minimize that.

Shea Houdmann

But then, as Kevin said, let's remember that Jesus died for all of our sins and when we accept him, trust in him. By grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone as our Savior. All of our sins are forgiven, and we are cleansed from all those. We don't need to feel guilt and shame. Regret, though I think that's something that I struggle with is a lot of sins in my life. I wish I'd never engaged in. But that doesn't have to be. There are good reasons why God is so clear and so consistent in scripture that sex is to be reserved for marriage.

Shea Houdmann

And so I hope our discussion today has kind of revealed both the biblical reasons, the theological reasons, and then the practical reasons why following God's pattern for marriage is best. So Jeff and Kevin thank you for joining me for the conversation today. Hope it's been edifying and encouraging to you. This is the Got Questions podcast. Got questions? The Bible answers and we'll help you find them.