

How Christians should deal with sexual desire

Zhang Cheng

Treat sexual thoughts correctly according to God's words

Today we are going to discuss a rather sensitive topic. It is about the relationship between two (opposite) sexes and sexual temptations. Whenever the Bible mentions sins, very often it would mention the sins between men and women such as fornication, adultery, etc. Obviously, this kind of sins is very common. In ancient time, this kind of sins is hidden. As time “advances”, this kind of things starts to become open. Not only open, they even become something one can be proud of (show off). The number of boyfriends or girlfriends you have determines how smart you are. If you don't have any boyfriends or girlfriends, people would regard you as very pitiful or very dumb. No wonder the Bible says that this world is dark, black and white are mixed up, right and wrong are turned upside down. Do not follow the trend of this world. Otherwise, you too would become a foolish person.

What does the Bible teach us? The Bible teaches us how to be a man, how to be a real man. Perhaps you have never thought that the answer is so simple. God created man, He also gave us this manual of life, to teach us how to be a real man.

Today, we cannot claim ourselves to be real human, because we have not lived as real human should. The reason why human is different from animals is that human has morality, able to tell what is

right or wrong, good or evil. Human should treat each other with sincerity and trust. Isn't this the basic principle for being a man? Unfortunately, there is no sincerity or trust in the society nowadays. If you mention sincerity and trust, you would be regarded as foolish. This is why we say black and white are mixed up, right and wrong are turned upside down. Therefore, we need the Gospel, we need salvation from God. This is exactly what the Bible is concerned about.

When we talk about the relationship between two sexes, I hope you really know how to discern. This world has instilled a lot of terrible concepts of values. These wrong concepts of values have already spread out. Many people think that if it is accepted by the majority, it must be right. This sort of assumptions is totally wrong. Therefore, churches should teach the believers how to correctly treat the issues on sexual relationships and sexual desire.



You might have noticed that churches never touch these topics. But at the same time, churches treat marriage very seriously. Since marriage is so important, how can they avoid the topics on sex life? Marriage definitely includes sex life. If marriage is godly, then is sex life also godly?

Why churches do not mention a word about sex life? In fact, it is because churches have a wrong concept about this topic. I believe as soon as we mention sex, many pastors would regard it as indecent or evil. Therefore they do not touch it. If they do not touch this topic, ultimately it is a loss for the young believers. They cannot tell how to treat sexual relations correctly. Consequently they would be deeply influenced by the sexual concepts in the world.

I dare to say that the majority of the churches and Christians regard sex as indecent or evil. Then I want to ask: if that is the case, why do we get married? The church should advise brothers and sisters on how to treat sex issues. Many youngsters have sexual desires, sexual thoughts, but they dare not say so. They are afraid that if they mention it, pastors would criticise them, other people would laugh at them, despise them. It is because the church or most Christians look at sexual relationship from the negative angle, it influences how Christians look at sexual passion. Everything becomes negative. Therefore, they dare not talk about it, they dare not mention it. Consequently they hide it. Since young believers cannot get any correct guidance from the church, they can only follow the worldly trend and value system. This is the common situation. Also, some wrong concepts about the relationship between two sexes often cause much unnecessary guilty feelings. They regard sexual relations as indecent or evil. Once they have the thought of sexual desire, they feel guilty. They dare not seek advice. Eventually, they even dare not draw close to God. Their relationships with God become further apart.

If marriage is established by God, since God created man, and also created woman, then obviously, sexual desire is also given by God. Otherwise, how come a man or a woman would think of getting married? How would human being reproduce? We need to understand: whatever God gives must be good, because God is good and kind. A good and kind God would not give us bad things. Then why should we regard sexual desire as indecent? It is because nowadays, whatever we see, whatever we hear are all shameful matters. But these have nothing to do with God. The marriage as established by God is godly.

We have to understand: No matter



how good a thing is, if we do not use it properly or if we abuse it, it would become bad. Food is a good example. No matter how good or how healthy it is, if you eat too much, you would get sick. Excessive use or improper use of any good thing would cause problems. Similarly, sexual relationships are good and normal. But nowadays, plenty of diseases are caused by sexual relationships. Aids is one of those diseases. This is utterly the bad outcome of self indulgent sexual activities.

Our objective is to correctly understand sexual desires, the relationship between two sexes, and also to correct some wrong concepts about sex. Let us first read a Bible verse, Matthew 5:28

But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The reason why we have negative perceptions about sexual desire is because we have misapprehended the words from the Bible. Let us spend some time to think about these words from Jesus. Here it says whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has “already” committed adultery with her in his heart. How do we comprehend these words from Jesus?

Perhaps I ask you a question: When you see a handsome boy or a pretty girl in your school or work place, what reactions do you have? Would you indulge in fantasy? I think you would, more or less, especially if you are a youngster. If you are not married yet, you would think more in this direction. Agree? Perhaps I ask you a further question: Whenever you see intimate episodes between a male and a female in a movie, what would you have in your mind? Let us be realistic. This is a normal growth process. You definitely would have sexual fantasies. The important point is: as a Christian, how should we treat it? How can we keep these sexual fantasies under

control?

Once you have sex fantasy, you have obscene thoughts. If that is the case, what should you do? We all have these experiences more or less. The trouble is, according to Jesus' words, you have committed adultery already. What should we do? If you are weak in this area, you would be committing adultery every day. How should we comprehend these words from Jesus? Is it true that once we have the thought, we have committed adultery already?

We have to look at sexual thoughts correctly according to God's words. We have to understand one point. People have the ability to imagine. The Bible does not forbid people to imagine. Many people have read the Song of Solomon. People feel embarrassed when they read the Song of Solomon. It is because the descriptions on the relationship between man and woman are very "disgraceful". They should not appear in the Bible. There are many vivid descriptions on the human body, which undoubtedly would cause people to imagine. We can see that the Bible does not mind us to imagine. We have to understand that people have the ability to imagine. The Bible also does not say it disallows us to imagine. But the critical point is that you must know how to control your thoughts.

We should also admit a fact: love for beauty is man's natural instinct. We do not need to pretend that we do not belong to this category of people. When we see a pretty girl or a handsome boy, we can't help to have another look at her or him. If we do not know how to control ourselves, we would start to imagine. If our thoughts cannot be stopped, we would lose control. Humans are like this. Nevertheless we



must correctly understand the teachings of the Bible. We cannot use our experiences or perspectives to comprehend the Bible. Wrong explanations of these words from Jesus would cause a lot of problems.

The Bible tells us clearly: God would judge us according to our deeds. The Bible never says God would judge us according to our thoughts. Otherwise, we would be in trouble. The Bible never says that thought is equivalent to deed. If thought is equivalent to deed, having an obscene thought is equivalent to committing fornication, then we would rather commit fornication than having the thought only. Therefore, correct interpretation of the Bible is very important. If you advise brothers or sisters incorrectly, let them feel that having the thought is equivalent to committing fornication, then they would rather commit fornication actually, after all the outcome is the same – death. Here Jesus does not mean that if you have the thought, it is equivalent to committing fornication.

Therefore, misunderstanding these words from Jesus would lead us to a lot of serious consequences. For example, young believers would have a lot of unnecessary guilty feelings. These guilty feelings would lead them to run away from pastors, or even run away from church. That's because they thought that they have committed fornication already. Young people may have sexual fantasies on opposite sex. They are often frustrated by these thoughts. They need advice from spiritual seniors in order to overcome these thoughts. These problems can be resolved. If leaders tell them that sexual desires are indecent, they are equivalent to committing fornication, they would never dare to discuss this topic with pastors.

Let us find out the true meaning of these words from Jesus. Jesus wanted to warn us: fornication starts from thoughts; you have to find ways to control your thoughts. If you do not control your sexual

fantasies, then fantasising continuously would ultimately lead you to sin.

You have to understand the make-up of man. We rely on our senses to contact things. Whatever your eyes see, your ears hear would enter into your thoughts, developing into fantasies or imaginations. If these thoughts are not controlled, they would definitely become actions. This is exactly what Jesus wanted to warn us about. When would this action take place? It depends on the opportunity. If your thoughts or fantasies are not controlled, subsequently they would wait for the opportunity to take action according to what is in your mind. This is a process. When you see something, you will think about it. After you think about it, you would think more about it. The more you think, the more you want to act. This is the reason why Jesus said tear the eye out and cut the hand off: You should control it at all costs. Let us read a Bible verse, James 1:15

Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

The Bible warns us that desire would conceive after fermenting for a while, it would then give birth to sin, which is the result of desire put into action. At the end, the outcome is death. Committing sin is a process. You won't vent your temper on a person suddenly. You must have been simmering your emotions about this person for a long while. When the opportunity comes, it explodes. All sins are a process. You won't suddenly want to sin without a reason. The sin between a man and a woman is also a process. If you don't know how to control it, you would definitely commit the sin. But don't feel guilty if you only have some thoughts, believing you have sinned already. Do not feel guilty unnecessarily. You only need to learn to

control these thoughts. If you find it difficult to control, talk to your pastor. Don't ever drift away from God.



As a lot of people know, King David had committed adultery and murder. Why did David commit murder? It was all because he was fond of somebody else's wife. How did he become fond of her? It was because one day, after siesta, he wandered around on the rooftop of the palace. He saw a woman having a bath. After that, what did he do? Definitely, he was thinking: Who is this woman? I want to see her. Then he summoned her to the palace to have a look. After a look, he was fond of her. Then he had sex with her. A series of sins then followed. In order to cover up his sin of adultery, he plotted to murder the woman's husband.

The reason why David committed adultery was not because he took a look at the woman on the rooftop of the palace. It was not because he summoned her to the palace to see her either. It was at the very moment that he had sex with Bathsheba, at that very moment, he actually committed adultery. That very moment was through a process. It was because he did not control his thought. If you do not want to sin, you have to control your eyes. This is a very practical suggestion. Because what you have not seen, or heard, you cannot fantasise. Therefore, the fundamental way is to control your eyes. However, this is a process. Once your thought cannot be controlled, you are bound to sin. Therefore, if you do not want to commit adultery, you have to learn to discipline your thought. This point is very important.

Talking about thoughts, healthy young people cannot avoid to

have sexual fantasies. They cannot avoid to be curious about the relations between two sexes. If you let your imagination run loosely out of curiosity, I reckon this is normal, but you have to know how to control it. You have to be very careful about some thoughts. For example, if the target of your fantasy is a married woman or a married man, then this kind of thought is a lust, because this kind of thought is equivalent to trying to seduce the target, with the intention to ruin other people's family.

If your thought has a specific target, then you must be careful. This is no longer an unreal target. If it is a real target, a person you can contact in real life, you have to be very careful. This would lead you to committing the sin because the target can be seen and can be touched.

I can only say this in general. When a healthy person has this kind of curiosity or thought, to a certain degree, it is normal. But you have to control it. Once it gets out of control, problems arise. The reason I say it in this way is because I do not want you to have unnecessary guilty feelings. I don't want you to condemn yourself once you have this kind of thoughts, to the point that you dare not read the Bible, that you dare not pray. This is unnecessary. You only need to understand God's will and the biblical teachings, try your best to avoid these thoughts, or just let them flash away.

Masturbation

I am going to talk about a more sensitive topic – masturbation. All young people have this issue. But nobody dare to talk about it directly. There are two possible cases for masturbation. One is the physiological reaction. Through touching, playing with the reproductive organs to produce pleasant sensation. Gradually it becomes a habit. It is common for both boys and girls. It is a

natural path for physiological growth. When girls get along with boys, always try not to have body contacts. It is because it would cause physiological reaction. Initially he or she does not have any thought. But because of the body contact, it triggers his or her physiological reactions. And physiological reactions naturally lead to mental reactions. Consequently you become his or her temptation, enticing him or her to sin.

If your masturbation does not have a specific target, then it is just a physiological reaction. If a youngster does not have sexual desire, it is abnormal. The critical point is to know how to control this kind of desire. Not knowing how to exercise self-control, you would develop the habit of masturbation.

Having said that, there is one point you need to be careful: once you have too much sexual fantasies, naturally you would find some ways to satisfy your desires. If you do not have a specific target, you would masturbate to satisfy your desires. This would be very disadvantageous to you. It would develop into a long-term habit, weakening your will power, your ability to discipline. Truly you have to be very careful on this point. That is why I said you need to learn how to control yourself on your thoughts. This way you can avoid falling into the trap of uncontrolled habits.

Masturbation cannot be regarded as a sin. I don't want to increase your burdens or your guilty feelings in your hearts. But I must emphasize: this is not to say that you can now indulge in masturbation, because this would bring you related consequences. As I said, if your thoughts are not controlled, they would lead to actions. Boys have many ways to turn their thoughts into actions, for example, finding prostitutes, raping, committing indecent assault, or touching a lady on a bus. If a girl has too much fantasies, naturally

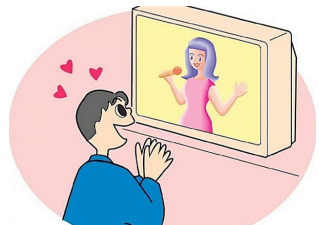
she would wish to have a male to take the initiative to contact her. She would then become a prey, waiting to be captured by a man. Many girls allow strange men to have sex relations with them within a short period of acquaintance. This is because they already have a long period of sexual fantasies. Therefore, once the opportunity comes, they get out of control.

If you truly feel that you cannot control your sexual desires, you need to resolve it with masturbation, then all I can say is that this is an undesirable option; but still it is better than committing adultery. But never indulge in it, otherwise you would truly get out of control. In fact, the reason is very simple. It is like watching TV series. People would indulge in it very easily. This is more so with sexual desire. If you do not know how to control it, it would control you.

How to cope with the troubles of lust

Lastly, let us talk about how to cope with the troubles of lust. In the Gospel of Matthews, the Lord Jesus reminds us to notice our thoughts. If you do not want to commit the sin of adultery, then you should not indulge in your thoughts. If you do not want to indulge in your thoughts, then you should not be idle. The ancients said, “After you are full and warm, you start to think about lust.” Normally, when you are too comfortable and at leisure, you have the time to fantasise. During the time of famine or war, you wouldn’t have the energy to think about these things.

For example, some people would watch TV or read a novel when they have free time. Whatever you look at is whatever you think. This was exactly what Jesus wanted to say. Why would you lust after a woman when you look at her? When Jesus said “look”,



grammatically it was not looking once only. It was looking continuously. That is, after one look, you want to have a second look, a third look..... Looking continuously would lead to improper desires. This is not to say that while you are walking along a road, you see a woman passes by. You notice that she is rather pretty. Then all of a sudden, you would have lust. Normally you wouldn't. Lust is the result of a continuous process of after having a specific target, looking repeatedly and thinking repeatedly.

Therefore, whatever your eyes come into contact would influence your thoughts. Girls like to watch Korean dramas. They indulge in those romantic episodes easily. Excess watching would influence your thoughts. Especially after watching a Korean drama before bed, the scenes of the drama hover in your mind one after another. Unavoidably, you would have fantasies, because at that moment, your brain is idle. Some people would dream of the drama scenes in their dreams. Therefore, if you do not want to be troubled by these thoughts, then you cannot be idle, doing nothing. You can choose to do some meaningful work. Do not allow yourself to give way to foolish fancies.

I have a habit. When I come across some hard-to-understand Bible verses, I will write them down. When I go to bed, I would think over these verses to find out their meanings. After thinking repeatedly, slowly I fall asleep. This was a secret that I discovered after I was converted. It is very helpful to me. If you can cultivate this habit, the Lord's words would also be imprinted into your heart.

1. Flee

Let us read a Bible verse that is familiar to everybody. 2Tim 2:22

Flee also youthful lusts, but pursue righteousness, faith, love,

peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

This was suggested to Timothy by Paul. Do not forget that Timothy was a pastor. If a pastor needs to flee from lusts, how much more do we need to do the same? If what you see or hear would affect your thoughts, then the simplest way is to flee. If you know that some scenes in a movie may affect you, then you should not watch that movie. Or if you know that the contents of a book would arouse your lust, then you should not read that book. You should avoid these temptations. Otherwise, the more you get into contact with them, the more you would be troubled by them.

Compare with the youngsters twenty years ago, today, the youngsters are harder to cope with temptations. Take surfing on the internet as an example, initially you have no intention to look at something indecent; but suddenly some pictures appear automatically. (Girls are in a better position because these pictures normally target towards boys.) When they appear, unless you quickly turn them off, if you have another look, you would think: If I click on them, would the pictures be more exciting? They would further entice you, arousing your sexual fantasies on the opposite sex. Many boys therefore, fall into the trap and cannot get out.

Compare with the past, I reckon nowadays the temptations youngsters have to confront are more and bigger because this is a generation in which black and white are turned upside down. The concept of marriage that the world instil into you is sexual relationships. Marriage is purely for the sake of satisfying one's sexual desires. Friendship and relationship are not important. You only need sexual relationship. This is a wrong concept. This is also one of the reasons that cause high rate of divorce. Because once your sexual desires are satisfied, what else can keep your relationship?

Only friendship can keep your mutual relationship. But friendship takes time to cultivate. It cannot be established by “one night passion”. Unfortunately, what the world instil into the youngsters is this kind of wrong concepts: Love is a one-night passion. Marriage is for the sake of sexual activities. Even your parents will tell you that marriage is for the sake of bearing babies. They have to be boys too. The sublime concept of marriage that was established by God is completely destroyed.

2. Flee is not the solution, we need to pursue goodness

Paul wanted Timothy to flee youthful lusts. The most obvious one was the sexual temptations. If you know that you are weak in this area, you must flee. But fleeing only is not the ultimate solution. Therefore, Paul also made another suggestion to Timothy: You have to pursue, meaning you must not flee negatively. Your life must have a clear goal.



Christians must pursue to live a healthy life. That is why I often encourage discipline in Christian lives. Exercise frequently. Otherwise when you have too much excess energy, you would give way to fancies. Many people are very tired after work. When they go home, the first thing they want to do is sleep for a while. After sleeping for a while, they are unable to get into sleep at night. Some people would suffer from insomnia. Then what would they do when they are lying on the bed? They give way to fancies, even sexual fantasies.

Exercises, in addition to helping us to have a healthy body, they

also help us to live a healthy life so that we won't let ourselves sleep at the time when it is not supposed to sleep, become wide awake when it is time to sleep. Today the lives of many youngsters are turned upside down. They are chaotic. If you lose control in your daily living, without discipline, then you would not have the power to overcome the sexual temptations in your life.

3. Be careful when making friends

Paul encouraged Timothy to pursue righteous, devout, loving and peaceful life, especially to pursue with people of the same goal. There was a Chinese saying: “he who stays near vermilion gets stained red, and he who stays near ink gets stained black”, meaning people can be affected by the kind of people around them. If the people around them are good, they would become good. If the people around them are bad, they would become bad. Obviously what kind of friends we make is most important. You should initiate to pursue a devout life together with the people who fear God. In this way, God's blessings would be given to you to let you live a victorious life. Those friends who advocate erotic behaviours (e.g. sexual freedom, cohabitation, watching erotic videos, etc.), you must flee from them. Otherwise, you will weaken your self-control and destine yourself to failure.

4. Always let God's words stay in your heart

Another suggestion is: You should always keep God's words in your heart. Let God's words remind you, safeguard you constantly. God's words can protect your heart like a shield, preventing you from falling into temptations. Furthermore, you have to draw close to God through prayers frequently. We have a wrong kind of concept: once we have a bad thought, our hearts feel guilty. We dare not approach God, dare not pray to God. On the contrary, I reckon in

this situation, you need God even more. Because you are weak, you need to draw close to God even more.

Why do you need to take notes on sermons? The notes are not for the pastor to read. They are for you to think over and over about the sermon that you listen to. Through thinking over and over again, God's words would enter into your heart gradually. Perhaps you don't notice anything different. But at critical moments, God's words would surface from our hearts, guiding us on what to do and how to do it. This is the wonderful work of God's words.

5. If it is hard to overcome, talk to your pastor

If you have great struggles on sexual lust, if you find it difficult to overcome, you should talk to your pastor. Don't ever be like Adam and Eve, who tried to escape from God by all means. Escaping or hiding can only make things worse.



It is because the Devil would make use of your weaknesses to accuse you and eventually making your relationship with God drift apart. Therefore, on the topic of two sexes, if there is anything that you don't know how to resolve, you can talk to your pastor. You have to trust your pastor. They are not here to dominate you. They won't deliberately find the opportunity to punish you. They are your teachers prepared by God, to offer you help whenever you need it.

(Translated by Peter Ng)

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