

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The second series of 6 Bible studies is about 6 important relationships: Christian love, Christian friendship, the Christian men-woman relationship, the Christian marriage relationship, the Christian parent-child relationship and unequal yoke-relationships. Today's Bible study is: A DISCIPLE HAS SELF-CONTROL. The fundamental question is "WHAT CHARACTERISES THE CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS THE OPPOSITE SEX?"

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. (T) For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. (S) It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; (T) that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, (S) not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; (T) and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told and warned you. (S) For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. (T) Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit."

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(S) An important truth for me is in verse 3 about the spread of sexual immorality. It says, "It is God's will ... that you should avoid sexual immorality." We live in a time in which sexual immorality is on the increase. More and more school children are getting involved. Cheap pocketbooks displaying sexual immorality are sold on the streets and sexual immoral films are shown in the homes of families who possess a TV. In spite of the fact that the authorities advocate "safe sex", teenage abortions are dramatically on the increase. Traditional patterns of relating to the opposite sex are replaced by modern patterns, which include no restraint in the area of sex. Teenagers and even many adults do not know the dangers involved in sexual immorality. They don't realise that "safe sex" is NOT safe at all. Most young people do not know how "to date" the opposite sex. The only examples they have are the immoral films and pocketbooks and the example of their immoral friends. However, the Bible clearly teaches us how to relate in a healthy way towards the opposite sex.

(T) An important truth for me is in verse 1 about the need for sanctification. It says, "We instructed you how to live in order to please God." This passage makes it very clear that people cannot live like they want, especially not in the area relating to the opposite sex. This Bible passage teaches me very clearly how I should live in relationship to the opposite sex in order to please God. The only thing that pleases God is our sanctification. And our sanctification in the area of the opposite sex is three things: First, to avoid sexual immorality. Second, to learn to control our bodies. Third, not to wrong my brother in the matter of sexual immorality. I want to continue to teach these truths to young people everywhere in the world, so that they may learn how to please God.

(S) **STEP 3. QUESTION**

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question from verse 3. What is the difference between "sexual immorality" and "adultery"?

(T) Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." Sexual immorality is every kind of unlawful sexual act with anybody. It includes the act of sex in one's thoughts, in one's desires and in one's talk. "Adultery" is a part of sexual immorality. Adultery is every kind of unlawful sexual act with the spouse of another person. It is unlawful interference in another person's marriage. It includes flirting and being the guilty partner of a divorce. Both words can also refer to apostasy from God and idolatry, because turning away from the living God or turning towards gods devised by religious leaders is spiritual immorality or spiritual adultery in the eyes of the living God. To summarise. "Sexual immorality" is especially every kind of unlawful sexual act before you are

married and “adultery” is especially every kind of unlawful sexual act outside your own marriage. The conclusion is that the Bible very clearly teaches that the only lawful sex is with your own marriage partner and then only after you two have married. The Bible warns that God will judge the sexual immoral and the adulterer!

2nd Question from verse 4. Verse 3-4 says, “Avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body.” This means that God says that a person is sexually immoral when he or she does not control his or her own body. “How does a person learn to control his or her own body?” Let us take turns to teach how a person controls his or her own body.

(S) First. Learn to control your tongue. Ephesians 5:3-4 says, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.” The word “sexual immorality” is used in connection with the tongue. “Obscenity” is indecent speech like gossiping about the sex-life of people or using sex-words in swearing. “Coarse joking” is telling dirty jokes or jokes with a sexual connotation. Christians must give healthy sex education to their children and in a serious manner discuss how to develop the sexual relationship inside marriage. However, gossiping or joking about sex is sexual immorality. Among Christians there must not be even a hint of gossip or joking about sex!

(T) Second. Learn to control your eyes. Job 31:1 says, “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.” All men in the world are particularly tempted by what their eyes see. If a man sees a woman who does not dress properly or does not cover her body in a decent way, then he can get tempted to think sexually immoral thoughts. If a man sees magazines with pictures of immoral women, then he can get tempted to think sexually immoral thoughts. Most of the time, sexual immorality begins with what he sees with his eyes. This triggers immoral thoughts in his mind. This leads to an immoral decision and finally to an immoral act. The battle against sexual immorality always begins with what he sees, with what he hears and with what he thinks. Therefore God wrote these words in the Bible: “Make a covenant with your eyes not to look lustfully at a woman.” Make an agreement with God to avoid places that expose immoral women, to avoid looking at sexually immoral magazines or movies and to avoid reading immoral books. Make an agreement with God that when you encounter such people or such pictures, not to allow your looking to linger longer or to look at them a second time.

(S) Third. Learn to control your heart or mind. Proverbs 6:25 says, “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.” God has created most women beautiful. Some women, however, misuse their beauty to trap men into unlawful sexual immorality. With the way they dress or with the way they move their bodies or wink with their eyes, they want to seduce men to sin. Prostitutes all over the world know their own weakness as well as the weakness of men. The centre of control inside every human being is “the heart”. The heart controls the thoughts of the mind, the desires of the heart and the choices and decisions of the will. Although a person can sometimes not help seeing such an immoral woman, he can decide not to keep looking at her. The Bible says, do not even consider her beauty or her efforts to capture you. Do not allow your heart to desire her. Allow the Holy Spirit living in you to control your mind and heart. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, the Bible says that we must “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”.

(T) Fourth. Learn to control your feet. Proverbs 5:7-10 says, “Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her, do not go near to the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich another man’s house.” Every city in the world has prostitutes and pimps. Every village has women and men of bad reputation. Everybody knows where they live and where they walk trying to catch people in their traps. The Bible says that you must avoid going to such places. The Bible says, “Keep to a path far from her, do not go near to the door of her house.” Avoid the “red light district” and avoid the bars, massage parlours, discos and clubs where these people are waiting to trap you. Avoid friendship with girls or boys of bad reputation in your school. You must learn to control your feet and not walk close to any of these places.

(S) Fifth. Learn to control your hands. Proverbs 5:15-21, “Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer - may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife? For a man’s ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all his paths.” The modern relationship between men and women, especially among young people, often does not know any boundaries anymore. People think that they can do anything they like without having to fear the consequences. Therefore, many people do not control their hands. When they are relating to the opposite sex, they will caress any part of the other person’s body and even put their hands under the clothes of the other person. The touching of men generally more easily tempts women and therefore men must learn to control their hands. Just like the laws of a country describe the boundaries of social life and traffic laws describe the boundaries of safe driving, likewise

the Bible describes the boundaries in the area of sex. You must learn to control your hands and only touch a person from the opposite sex in a holy and honourable way.

(T) Conclusion. Christians must relate in a different way than non-Christians to the opposite sex. The Bible teaches that a man may win a wife for himself. However, the Bible teaches very clearly that a man may not win a wife in passionate lust. When young people “date”, that is, relate to the opposite sex, they should never flirt, but be very serious about winning a wife. God commands that relating to the opposite sex must happen in a way that is holy and honourable and not in the way of passionate lust. The “holy way” means a way that is different and separated from the way of this present sinful world. A “honourable way” means a way that is respected, not only by other people within your culture, but also by the living God. God must not be able to condemn your way of relating to the opposite sex. And other people must not be able to slander your way of relating to the opposite sex. God’s intention is that men and women exercise self-control over their bodies in the whole period before their marriage. They must control their tongues, eyes, mind, feet and hands. It is not the culture of your nation and also not the religious leaders of your nation, but only the living God of the Bible who establishes the boundaries in the relationship to the opposite sex. The living God has very clearly commanded what men and women may NOT do during the period in which they are winning one another with a view towards marriage. Men and women must avoid every kind of sexual immorality.

(S) Therefore, Christians must establish clear boundaries for the relationship between men and women. These boundaries must conform to the clear teachings of the Bible. Christian leaders must teach these biblical boundaries to the people entrusted into their care. And Christian young people, who start to relate to the opposite sex, must agree with one another to stay within these biblical boundaries. Practically, the two people of the opposite sex, who want to get to know one another better by relating as friends together, must make an agreement with God and with one another about the boundaries in their relationship. Their agreement should include four practical areas:

One. Time. When do you want to meet together? How often do you want to meet together? How long do you want to meet together? At what time should you end your meeting together?

Two. Place. Where do you want to meet together? To which places may you go together? To which places will you not go?

Three. Activities. What things will you do together? What things will you not do together? Acknowledge to one another that God is seeing everything that you two are doing.

Four. Physical contact. The Bible demands abstinence from sex before marriage. According to God’s standards in the Bible, what kind of physical contact may you then have? What kind of physical contact may you *not* have? What kind of physical contact, although biblically permissible, is not culturally acceptable in your country? What kind of touching will build one another up? What kind of touching, although biblically permissible and culturally acceptable, nevertheless does not help your partner?

(T) STEP 4. APPLY

After we have brainstormed and recorded a list of *possible applications* from 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a *personal application*.

My personal application is the following. I will continue to teach young people everywhere that the Christian way of relating to the opposite sex is a very wonderful way to win your future life-partner. I want to do this Bible study together with all the young people I get a chance to influence.

(S) My personal application is the following. I practise controlling my eyes and my thoughts. I have made an agreement with God not to look at men or women in a lustful way and to deliberately banish sexual immoral thoughts every time they enter my mind.

(T) STEP 5. PRAY

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

Dear Father in heaven, give me more opportunities to teach young people what you command about relating to the opposite sex. I pray for all Christian leaders in the world, that they will diligently teach all the truths of the Bible, including the truth of avoiding sexual immorality and living holy lives.

(S) Dear Father in heaven, I have made an agreement with you that I will not look lustfully at men or women. Help me to control my eyes, mind and feet, so that I will always avoid sexual immorality. Please help unmarried people to win their future life partner in holiness and honour.

(T) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Prepare next week’s Bible study. The Bible study topic is “A disciple develops a Christian marriage”. And the Bible passage is Ephesians 5:22-33.

Second. Prepare next week’s Bible study from Ephesians 5:22-33. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks “Go and make disciples” and Internet on www. etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to “Discipleship training on the air”.