

cient religious traditions rather than the bible. Statements which attribute blame or responsibility to one gender over another in sexual matters are not reflecting God's heart for his creation.

All of God's instructions re sexuality and purity are directed to all of us and in the context of God's intention always being for our own good and protection.

When looking for books suitable for young people, choose those which promote relying on God to fulfil needs and desires rather than other people - articles which promote the truth that finding a life-partner is not our first calling from God. Much of recent literature in our Christian bookshops gives teens instruction on how to be "dateable" including some rather dubious 'hints' on behaviours which will attract the attention of girls or guys. A healthier focus would be to encourage teens (and those of all ages) to look at the list in Galatians 5:22,23 of the fruits of the Holy Spirit...patience, kindness, goodness, self-control, gentleness, faithfulness, love, joy, peace. As daughters and sons of God, living by the Spirit should be our primary concern and then the fruits of the Spirit will grow naturally in our lives. Thinking of each other as "people" goes a long way to treating others as you would like to be treated, whether they are of the same gender or potential "marriage material"

A final word...when it comes to matters of the heart, we all have existing mindsets shaped in part by our life experiences. So as you evaluate material which deals with the most intimate of human relationships, ask God to renew your mind and prepare your heart to look at these issues from God's perspective.

The last verse of Psalm 139 has this to say...*"Search me O God and know my heart - test my thoughts. Point out anything you find in me that makes you sad and lead me along the path of everlasting life."*



NOTES

¹ Gary Ezzo GKGW - "Take the child to the standard, not the standard to the child".

² H. McEwan "Facets" - God's ways most certainly are higher than ours but they are not higher *than His own*. If a person suggests that their anti-biblical stance is O.K. because after all "God's ways are higher than our ways" you are speaking to a person deceived. Consider the GKGW lesson on Law, Principle and Freedom.

* Is there a biblical mandate? (Law)

* Is there a principle to be derived?

* Is this an area of freedom?

³ H. McEwan "Facets" - Consider the Author's use of scripture - has it been quoted in or out of context with the surrounding text, in consideration of the context of the times (spoken in specific circumstances?) and/or with regard for what the rest of Scripture has to say on the subject?

By: Liz Sykes

Test Everything?

Assessing written opinion. Is it really Biblical?



1 Thessalonians 5: 21 - 23
(Living Bible)

Test everything that is said (written) to make sure it is true

and if it is true - then accept it.

Keep away from every kind of evil

May the God of peace himself
make you entirely devoted to God.

May your spirit, soul and body be kept strong and blameless
until that day when our Lord Jesus comes back again.





While these verses were written primarily regarding prophecy and the need to weigh carefully what is said, they can be applied to all statements which people suggest are reflecting what

God would say. For this reason, Heather used these verses when asking about writing some guidelines for "critical thinking for testing what one reads to see if it is godly thinking"

Being able to discern "godly thinking" presupposes some knowledge of how God thinks or what kind of thinking would be pleasing to God. A definition of the word "Pure" may be helpful here since purity is the subject of this whole presentation. *"Pure" - not mixed with any other materials - free from polluting matter.* This points up the fact that so much of what we read is not pure but a mixture of godly and secular thinking. Even Christian literature is not immune to this syncretism...secular philosophy has invaded our lives to such an extent that it can be hard to separate pure unadulterated truth from that which pollutes. The alarming fact that there is no difference in statistics of young people's sexual lives between those of Christian and non-Christian background should alert us to the fact that most of the literature available is not making the impact we would expect. While I don't claim to be the last word on how to choose the best books and articles I hope to give some guidelines to help you make good choices.

Proverbs 4:23 says "Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do" Choose writing which talks about heart attitudes before God and towards others. Purity is about attitude more than action - our motives more than behaviour. God's word is all about attitude - get that sorted and right living will follow. Just because literature is sprinkled with lots of bible verses doesn't necessarily mean it is getting to the heart of what pleases God. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were very diligent in doing the "right thing" but were severely rebuked because they looked in the wrong place - they would not go to Jesus for their answers for daily living. Another stumbling block is under-estimating human sinfulness. We can imagine that teaching what are "right & wrong" behaviours will guard against the subtlety of the human heart. The first step towards true purity in thought and action is the recognition that without God's grace we would all lead very "impure" lives.

Avoid books which speak more about wrong teaching than encouraging positive right beliefs and actions. We can become experts in what is wrong but still miss the best that God has for us. Just like the lawn principle....better to fertilise and grow a strong lawn than spend all our time digging out weeds. Weeds don't get



much chance to grow in a healthy lawn. Better to go for words that build up and promote healthy living in all areas of life. God's principles for relationships apply in all situations of life including our sexuality. Jesus words in Matthew 7:12 apply here: *"Do for others what you would like them to do for you"* Micah also has something to say about what God requires....*"do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God"* (chapter 6 verse 8)

One of the best statements for relationships comes from Ephesians 4:32 *"Be kind, tender-hearted to one another, forgiving one another just as Christ has forgiven you"*

Look to see how much of a book or article contains extra-biblical material. It is amazing how so many Christian authors draw heavily on the writings of secular researchers including those who believe that humans are just a superior form of animal. Observing animal behaviour and transferring those observations to humans denies the uniqueness of men and women made in the image of God. Along with this comes a certain kind of humour which makes light of God's wonderful creation. Any writing which demeans people or makes jokes about relationships in a derogatory way shows a lack of honour to those whom God has created

Some other concepts which have been included in many books regarding relationships are...

The suggestion that life is divided into two sections - sacred and secular - spiritual versus earthly - spirit and body. Anything which talks about the body and sexuality as anything less than God's good creation will not be helpful.

Statements which teach that even in marriage the sexual act is only legitimate for procreation are usually accompanied by other rules and laws which are very human in origin. This is another area where secular philosophy has been mixed in with biblical thought and without realising it readers can be drawn into a legalistic lifestyle.

Another area of extra-biblical thought is comparisons between female and male persons - generalisations regarding how people think and feel depending on their gender. Once again....secular thinking has tainted the pure word of God which shows us how to live with one another in ¹mutual respect and love regardless of personality, ability, status or gender. While some statements re gender-specific behaviours may strike a chord with our own experiences, the general instructions in the bible are for all people with no exceptions. Even the thought that purity is more of a "girl thing" is strongly tied up with an-

