

Are You Addicted to S_ _?

Several years ago my friend mustered up the confidence to tell me about her struggle with lust. Even though she wasn't dating anyone, she was afraid her fixation would eventually seduce her into having premarital sex.

Thinking about her problem made me want to blog about premarital sex, a topic I believe the church often shuns. But why? Christian singles have sex or want to have sex too. And though the Bible prohibits such behavior, that hasn't stopped believers from going too far.

Finding Security in the Father

We've likely had many opportunities to learn that seeking acceptance from anyone other than God is sinful, not to mention futile. But the hurts we experience in life can sometimes leave us feeling such rejection that we become desperate for people's approval. This sets us up for more heartache since no one can consistently give us the kind of approbation we need.

No human being can accurately assess our worth. Only our Creator really knows our value.

Lord, a Husband Please

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My friend wanted to be married, but she didn't waste time lamenting her singleness. But for many women, being single is a lonely life to live. They exhaust a lot of prayer time cutting deals with God: "Lord, if You allow me to get married, my husband and I will work together in ministry for You." But the reality is not everyone will get a chance to say I do, and God will still expect us to serve Him.

I used to pray similar prayers, but one day I stopped complaining long enough to hear the Holy Spirit speak. His message to me is my encouragement to you: Learn to be content in Christ as He unfolds His plans and purposes for your life—but by all means, have a life!

First Timothy 6:6 tells us "godliness with contentment is great gain," and it is. But contentment doesn't mean single women should mope around waiting for a husband.

Take advantage of the countless opportunities you have to do ministry and become the woman He created you to be. The Bible says the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few.

My friend met her husband in church where she was busy serving the Lord and fulfilling His purpose for her life. She doesn't regret waiting years for the right guy to come along.

Please don't spend all your time negotiating with the Father asking Him for a tall, dark and handsome man; use your time to advance the kingdom. His message of covenant love isn't directed at just married people. It's for every single

one of us.

How to Plan Your Ultimate Israel Pilgrimage

What if it were possible to travel back in time to ancient Jerusalem, where Jesus made His triumphal entry into the city? Or to take Holy Communion in the Garden Tomb where Christ was once buried? For many Christians, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land is only a dream.

But it doesn't have to be! With the economy forcing some airline companies to lower prices, consumers like you and me are reaping the benefits.

In March I boarded a 747 jet to take my first trip to Israel. What I discovered there was a dream come true.

Day 1: Tel Aviv/ Jaffa

When you touch down in Israel, be prepared to meet people from around the world.

Tourists visiting the country represent a tapestry of many races, cultures and nationalities. Israel is a conduit through which travelers from Asia, Africa and Europe must pass.

Begin your pilgrimage in Tel Aviv. The city has beautiful beaches that line the Mediterranean Sea and is home to the U.S. Embassy.

I suggest you go to the city's port area, where you will find a host of restaurants, shops and worthwhile tourist sites.

One of the oldest cities in the world is Jaffa, and many Christian tourists are drawn to the ancient seaport by its rich biblical history and ancient archaeology. Peter lived in Jaffa more than 2,000 years ago, and when he left there he went to Caesarea, which should be next on your itinerary.

Day 2: Nazareth

Drive to Caesarea Harbor and tour various ruins. Then go to Megiddo, or “Armageddon,” site of the final battle mentioned in the book of Revelation.

A favorite tourist stop in Israel is Nazareth, where Jesus spent the early years of His life. While there, visit the Basilica of the Annunciation, where Mary received word from the angel Gabrielle that she would carry the Savior of the world.

Day 3: Galilee

Many tourists anticipate spending the day in Galilee, and I was no exception. Start your day with a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee in a replica of the 2,000-year-old “Jesus boat.”

Visit the tranquil Mount of Beatitudes and Capernaum, where you will discover a marble synagogue dating to the third or fourth century. Capernaum is called “the city of Jesus” because He lived in the fishing town during His Galilean ministry.

Then, tour some of the holy sites including Tabgha, where Jesus performed the miracle of the fishes and loaves, and Bethsaida—the birthplace of Peter, Andrew and Philip.

Your tour will no doubt include a stop in Kursi, where Jesus cast demons from a possessed man into a herd of swine, and Yardenit, where pilgrims are baptized in a pool on the Jordan River.

Day 4: The Dead Sea

Considered the lowest surface area on earth, the Dead Sea lies 419 meters below sea level. It contains a high concentration of salt, which makes it impossible for anything to live in the water. Don't bother trying to take a swim; just get in and effortlessly float a while.

Next, go to Beit She'an, the ancient city where King Saul died in battle. As you approach the Qumran caves, you will no doubt be astonished by its overwhelming size and archaeological ruins.

To enjoy your visit to the caves, you'll need to wear a good pair of sneakers or hiking shoes. Here you will learn about the ancient Essene settlement, where a sect of Jewish zealots buried what are known today as the Dead Sea Scrolls, which include fragments of almost every book in the Old Testament. The scrolls were discovered there between 1947 and 1956.

Board the bus and head for the ancient ruins of Masada, where you will see archaeological revelations of King Herod's mountaintop fortress.

Day 5: Jerusalem

Welcome to Jerusalem! The highlight of any trip to Israel is a tour of Jerusalem. I suggest you begin your day with a visit to Yad Vashem National Memorial and Museum of the Holocaust. Next, go to the Shrine of the Book, where the Dead Sea Scrolls are exhibited, and tour the newly opened model of ancient Jerusalem.

No trip to the Holy City would be complete without a getaway to Mahane Yehuda, Jerusalem's main open market. Drive to Ein Karem, the birthplace of John the Baptist, then go to Haas Promenade to get a picturesque view of Jerusalem and the Old City basin.

Day 6: Mount of Olives

Today you will begin your sightseeing adventure on the Mount of Olives. The mountain is aptly known for its olive trees, but it's the old Jewish cemetery that occupies much of land area.

Descend the mountain by foot along Palm Sunday Road and stop at Dominus Flavit, the place where the Bible says Jesus wept for Jerusalem. After you tour the peaceful Garden of Gethsemane, visit the beautiful Church of All Nations.

Then enter the Old City through Zion Gate. Walk along the Via Dolorosa, the path Jesus traveled on His way to the cross.

As you make your way through the crowded streets of the Old City, go to the Holy Church of the Sepulchre and the museum of the history of Jerusalem at the Citadel.

Conclude your day with a visit to the Garden Tomb. According to my tour guide, the rock-hewn burial site is located in a garden that's considered by Protestants to be the site of the Crucifixion—a place called Golgotha.

Day 7: The Old City

Begin the final day of your pilgrimage with another trip to the Old City. Start with a visit to the Southern Wall excavations and the Davidson Centre. Then, make your way to the City of David to see archaeological finds built by King David.

Make your way over to the Western Wall and see the most "sacred site" in Jerusalem, and be sure to take lots of pictures. But if you arrive at the Wall on the Sabbath, you will not be permitted to take pictures or use videotape.

Then, wind your way through the Western Wall tunnels located deep beneath the surface. Visit the rebuilt Jewish quarters and Cardor Main Street from the Roman-Byzantine era.

One of my favorite sites in the Old City is Mount Zion. There

you will visit the Upper Room, where the Bible says in Acts 2:4 that the Holy Spirit fell on 120 believers while they were praying, including Jesus' mother, Mary. This is also the site of the Last Supper.

Next—free time! Go to Nahalat Shiva in downtown Jerusalem, where you can visit shops, eateries and more. Check out of your hotel—and leave for home with an experience of a lifetime.

Bless Israel

The Bible says anyone who blesses Israel will be blessed by God. That's one reason ministries based in Israel say it is important to invest in the future of the country with trips to the Holy land to bless its people.

While in Israel, break away from sightseeing to volunteer and serve. Vision for Israel, based in Jerusalem, and its feeding ministry, Joseph Storehouse, reach out to the poor, needy and orphans with food, shelter, clothing and the love of Jesus. My Olive Tree, founded by Curt Landry, offers a unique way to help build relationships between the evangelical community and the nation—through planting olive trees.

“The olive tree is significant. It symbolizes unity and reconciliation, and every time we plant an olive tree, we are bringing reconciliation to Israel,” says Landry.

A spokesperson for Israel Ministry of Tourism says Christian visitors to Israel contribute to the success of Israel and leave transformed.

“For nearly 2,000 years, Christian visitors from all over the world have come to the land of their spiritual heritage. It provides them with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience the land of the Bible, to deepen their faith and to be spiritually transformed.”

Valerie G. Lowe *is former associate editor of Charisma.*

10 Ways to Bless Israel

Many Christians have a love for Israel and are eager to visit the nation. But often their dreams don't stretch beyond touring the sites that have biblical significance for both Jews and Christians and perhaps taking photographs of them. However, there are numerous ways visitors can be a blessing to Israel, interact with the people and leave something of themselves behind when they travel there. Here are 10 of them.

Healing Hands at Hadassah

While I was in Israel in late March, I took time away from my tour schedule to visit Hadassah Medical Center. I'm glad I did. Hadassah was founded in 1918 and is the second largest employer in Jerusalem. But what impressed me the most were the stories I heard about the hospital long before I arrived in Israel.

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Grace to Grieve and Go Forward

God seems nearer to us when we are grieving the loss of someone we love. Trusting His Spirit to enable us, we will find ourselves going on, with our strength renewed, one step at a time.

Fueling the Fire: Grace to Grieve and Go Forward

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READ

2 Cor. 1:1-10 1 Thess. 4:13-14

Heb. 4:14-16 Rev. 21:4

HEART ISSUE

In our grief, we are often tempted to give in to anger and blame. But to do that is to forfeit the Holy Spirit's comfort and healing. How do we avail ourselves of God's help? How do we hinder the Spirit's comfort?

PRAYER FOCUS

Father, draw especially close to all those who are grieving the loss of someone special today. May they know Your divine peace, joy and eternal encouragement. Amen.

Brenda J. Davis is the acquisitions editor for Creation House.

Jewish Facilities Target of Terror Plot in New York

The four men arrested Wednesday for allegedly plotting to bomb a Jewish community center and a synagogue in Bronx, New York, have been charged with "conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction in the United States" and "conspiracy to acquire and use anti-aircraft missiles," CNN reported.

According to a criminal complaint filed in White Plains, New York, U.S. citizen David Williams, James Cromitie, Onta Williams, and Laguerre Payen from Haiti, met with an undercover FBI informant to get what they thought were actual weapons. The men allegedly planned to blow up two Jewish facilities and use surface-to-air missiles to shoot down U.S. military planes.