

From the girls' single sexuality talks...

Female lust is different from male lust and yet is rarely discussed (though it's equally problematic). Any practical tips for dealing with lustful thoughts?

Whether it comes in female or male form, all lust is pretty much the same thing. Lust has nothing to do with love. In fact, it's the opposite. It takes a person and makes them an object for our own personal gratification. Part of lust's pull is in its secrecy. So if you feel like this is a problem area for you, why not get a trusted Christian friend or leader to pray with you and even hold you accountable (by asking you tough questions from time to time). Often just opening up about our struggles is half the battle won already. In the same way that a former alcoholic would not spend time in a bar, you should also take practical steps to make sure that you don't put temptation in your way. If it's too hard to have the Internet at home without trawling dodgy sites, rather get rid of your connection at home (or visit www.xxxchurch.com for help or www.x3watch.com to download an accountability filter). If you find steamy novels or magazines are your weakness – get rid of them, and don't buy them! Don't watch movies that are sexually explicit in nature, or series' that promote sex and lust to god-like status (like *Desperate Housewives!*). We can all learn from Paul, who told the Philippians to rather focus their time and energy on whatever is pure, lovely, holy excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

What do you do when the ache in your heart is so deep that even when you tell yourself "I'm complete in Christ" – it's just not enough?

What if your heart desires to be in a relationship but you have a sense that God's will may be for you to be single for the rest of your life?

I don't want to be quick to brush off these very real feelings. Being single is not easy for many. Many, if not most women have an inbuilt desire to love and be loved. To nurture and be looked after. The pain and heartache in singleness is often rooted in a perception that one has to be in an exclusive, romantic relationship to express this God-given desire and need. But this is not true. Deep, loving and authentic friendships can offer us this space – to love and be loved. When the ache in your heart feels unbearable, remember that God knows you and loves you more than you could ever imagine. Let him into your pain. Trust him with your fragile heart and dreams. And prepare to marvel at how tender he is toward you – how compassionate he is and just how deeply he knows you. There's a great book in our bookshop called, 'Did I kiss marriage goodbye?'. It deals with this theme in far more detail.

I'm never sure where to draw the boundary lines with my male friends, and sometimes, things can get a little blurry. Advice? Can guys and girls really be close friends without complications developing?

Let's just be real – platonic relationships between members of the opposite sex are often tricky. Very often, one person will begin to develop feelings for the other, or, in our pursuit for intimacy, emotional and/or physical boundary lines can sometimes be crossed. Make sure that you're trying as best as you know how to remain pure-hearted in your friendships with guys. Are you using a boy as an emotional crutch? As a kind of pseudo boyfriend? (It's best to keep the really emotional stuff between you and your girlfriends). Do you find that you need his affirmation? Could you be leading him on – by lavishing him with too much attention? Would you be upset if he were to start dating someone? Would you welcome that person into your life and relationship? If/when you discover that something's changed in your platonic friendship (either you've developed feelings for him, or you suspect he has for you), it's important to be honest with yourself and him. You may need to let him know how you feel, and take a break from hanging out too much.

If you like him, and his actions are confusing you, it's ok to ask him to show his cards. But make sure you don't do all the pursuing. If you begin to pursue a man, and it results in a relationship, you'll end up pursuing him for the rest of your life. Don't let him off the hook – if he's not brave enough to pursue you courageously, he's either a wimp, or he's just not that into you :)

Why do all the decent Christian guys seem to be taken, or move really slow? This makes me want to hook up with a non-Christian guy.

Let's logically follow this thought. You'd rather be with a non-Christian guy than be single. You'd rather be strapped to a guy that doesn't love God, than be lonely. That's kind of like strapping yourself to a ticking time bomb! As harsh as this may sound, this kind of thinking portrays a real lack of trust in God and his plan for your life. If you were to hook up with a non-Christian guy, in the short-term, your loneliness might abate. But you're only setting yourself up for long-term, heartbreak, disappointment and despair. God knows what's best for you. He knows everything about you. Trust in him. Trust in his ways and his perfect timing. Breathe deep and dig into his grace.
