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SOCIAL ROLES

& RELATIONSHIPS

Romantic Relationships

There is hardly any area of life in which godly wisdom is needed more than romantic relationships.

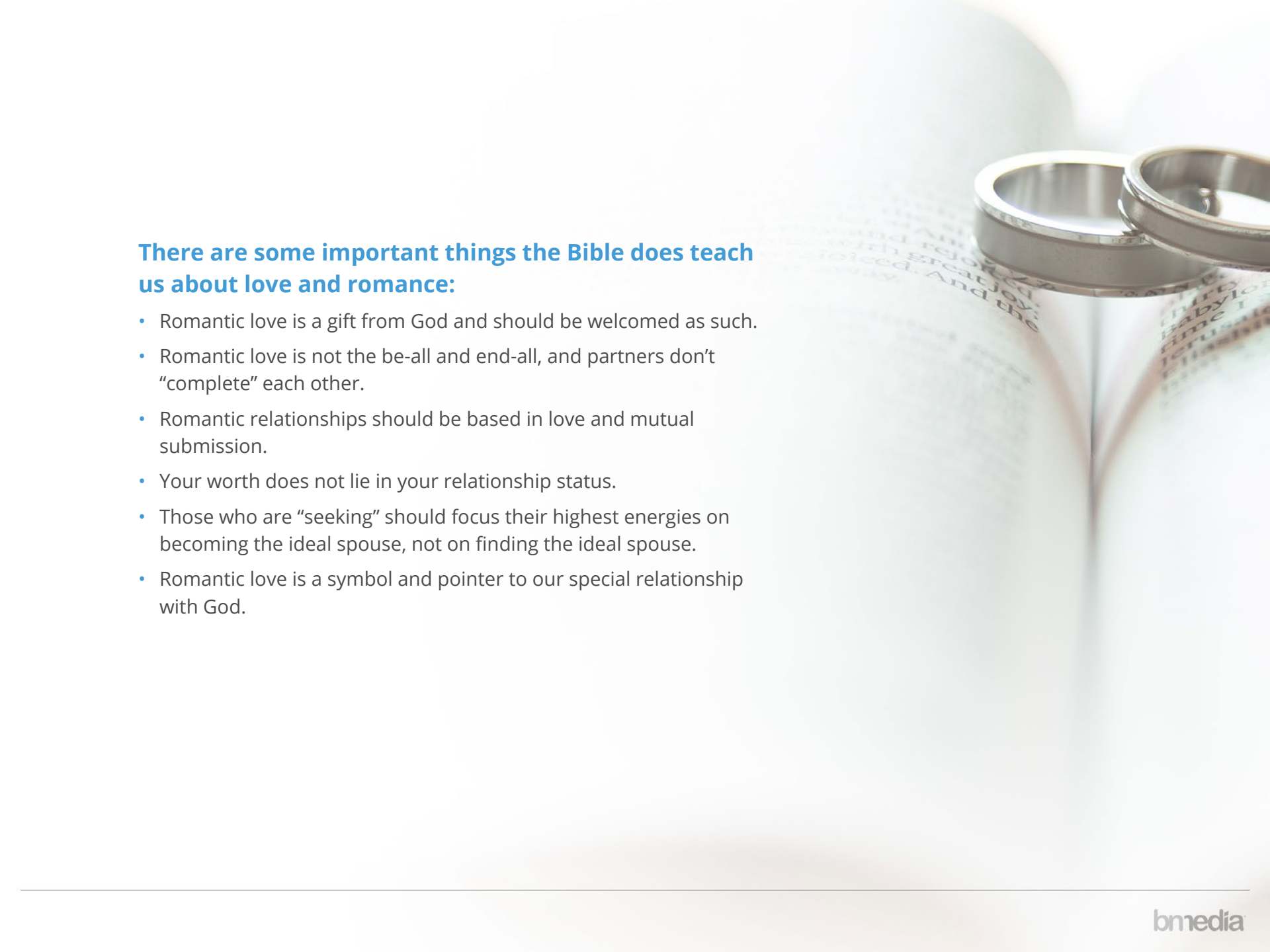
As we look at this area, it is important to understand the Bible does not speak directly to the issue of romance in marriage. The truth is that romance was not a big part of the process of obtaining a spouse in the culture of the Bible. In the Bible you loved the one you married rather than marrying the one you loved.

Most biblical marriages were arranged by the parents, particularly the fathers. This is not the kind of culture we live in today. This has its positives and negatives.

On the positive side, each person has more to say about who they marry.

On the negative side, the dating phase of a relationship can be a vulnerable time for each party involved, filled with potential problems.

We must take the biblical principles of the Word of God and apply them to this area of life.

An open book with two wedding rings resting on the pages. The book is open, showing text on both pages. The rings are silver and are placed on the right page. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

There are some important things the Bible does teach us about love and romance:

- Romantic love is a gift from God and should be welcomed as such.
- Romantic love is not the be-all and end-all, and partners don't "complete" each other.
- Romantic relationships should be based in love and mutual submission.
- Your worth does not lie in your relationship status.
- Those who are "seeking" should focus their highest energies on becoming the ideal spouse, not on finding the ideal spouse.
- Romantic love is a symbol and pointer to our special relationship with God.

Maintaining Moral Purity in Relationships

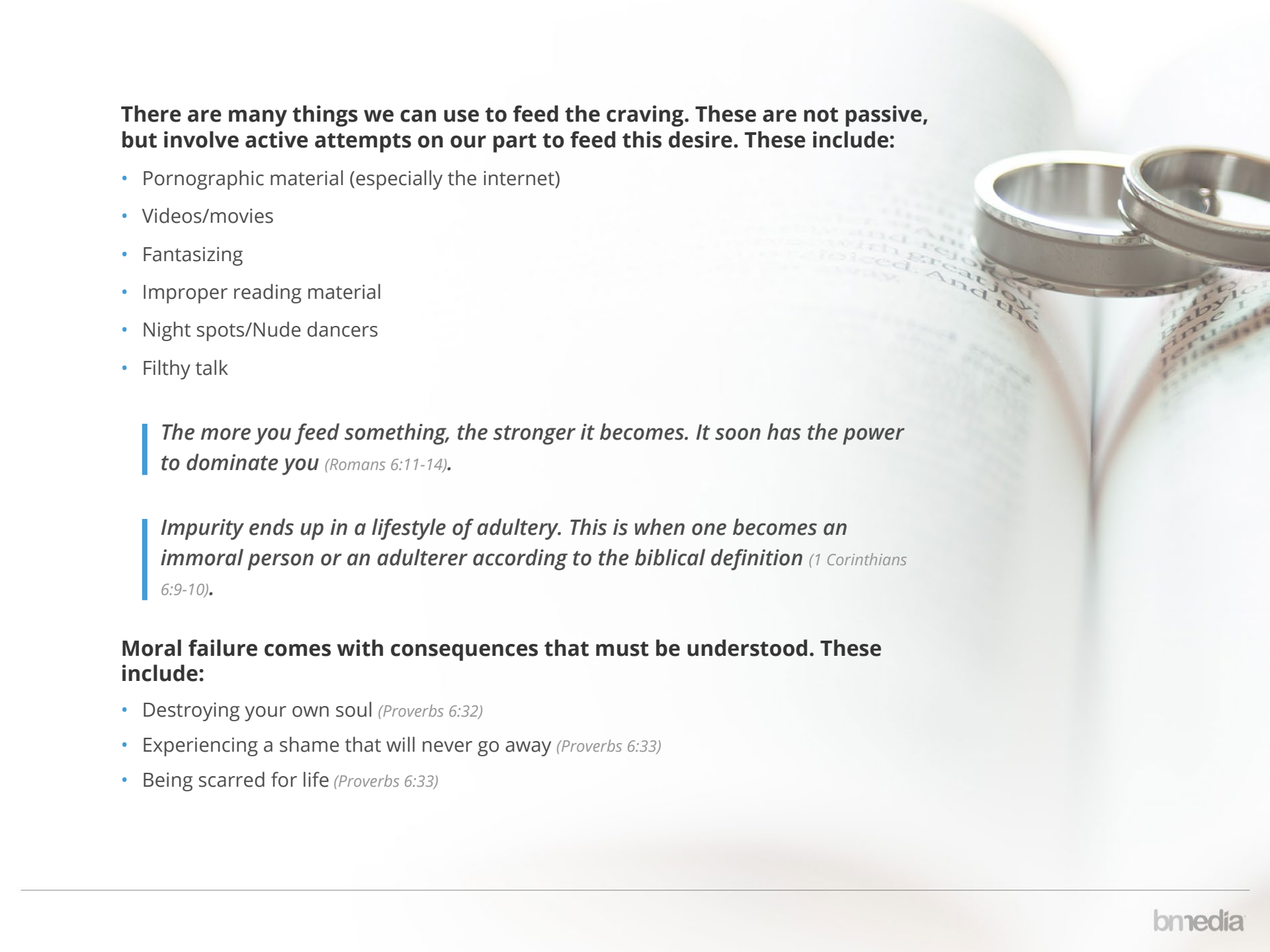
What are the first steps down on the road to moral purity?

We do not want to be ignorant to Satan's devises. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Moral sin has a progression that must be recognized and acknowledged (James 1:14-15).

It's important that we remember impurity begins in the mind. We must be conscious also that impurity is fed passively through the eyes.

Impurity progresses by actively feeding the sensual appetite. If you do not deal with the passive reception through the eyes, you will begin creating situations your mind will feed upon.

The Bible refers to this appetite as the "lust of the flesh" (1 John 2:16). A lust is a craving that must be fed.

An open book with two silver rings resting on the pages. The book is open to a page with text, and the rings are placed on the right side of the page. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

There are many things we can use to feed the craving. These are not passive, but involve active attempts on our part to feed this desire. These include:


- Pornographic material (especially the internet)
- Videos/movies
- Fantasizing
- Improper reading material
- Night spots/Nude dancers
- Filthy talk

The more you feed something, the stronger it becomes. It soon has the power to dominate you (Romans 6:11-14).

Impurity ends up in a lifestyle of adultery. This is when one becomes an immoral person or an adulterer according to the biblical definition (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Moral failure comes with consequences that must be understood. These include:

- Destroying your own soul (Proverbs 6:32)
- Experiencing a shame that will never go away (Proverbs 6:33)
- Being scarred for life (Proverbs 6:33)

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- Destroying the temple of God (*2 Corinthians 3:13-20*)
 - Hurting those you love (*Proverbs 2:17*)
 - Grieving friends and ruining friendships (*2 Corinthians 12:21*)
 - At the end of your life, you will groan (*Proverbs 5:11*)
 - You will experience death (*Proverbs 7:27; 14:12*)

Moral sin can be conquered by the believer.

- We must take the battle seriously (*1 Peter 2:11*).
- We must repent of any areas in which we have stumbled (*Psalms 51:1-13*).
- We must be willing to remove snares that cause temptation.
- We must deal with our thought life (*Philippians 4:18*).
- We must make a covenant with our eyes (*Job 31:1*).
- We must be willing to solicit the help of others.
- We must work hard to cultivate a healthy marriage.
- We must flee all impurity in the future, never overestimating our strength (*2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Corinthians 10-12*).
- We must keep busy doing the work of the Lord, serving others and extending the Kingdom of God. Idleness is an enemy (*Philippians 3:13-14; Hebrews 12:1-2*).

Dating and Engagement

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When it comes to Christian relationships, the mindset, motives and methods of the relationship can be very different than modern relationships.

First and foremost, a biblically-based relationship is about a relationship with Jesus Christ. The Bible says “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (*Ephesians 4:2-3*). From this, we know that relationships take work, but they are also rooted in love.

Satan is doing everything that he can to destroy this generation because he knows that there will be a generation that will tread on him. He uses music, entertainment (movies, TV, video games), drug culture, toys, pornography, the internet and many other avenues with the view of derailing this generation.

One major way he seeks to destroy young people and change the course of their lives is by promoting sexual promiscuity which leads to damaged self-image, unplanned pregnancies, abortions, broken relationships and poorly founded marriages which can lead to divorce.

Some of the issues that complicate the issue of dating:

- Dating is not specifically discussed in the Bible.
- Children see a totally wrong view of sex and male/female relationships on TV, in the movies and among schoolmates.
- Parents have had no teaching on biblical principles they could apply to the dating scene.

Some biblical concepts that apply to this area of dating and relationships:

- God wants us to be free from any premarital sexual encounters and promiscuity.
- God does want us to get married, but He wants us to do so without sinning in the process.
- The romantic desires that we have within us are given to us by God and are meant to push us toward marriage, which is part of God's eternal purpose (*Proverbs 5:15-20*).

The purpose of engagement is to provide a bridge from the state of being single to the state of being married. This is based on the recognition that this change will affect and involve many people, and that this adjustment will need some time to take place smoothly.

Once the decision is made to get engaged, the wedding should follow relatively soon after, to avoid elevating the potential for pre-marital sexual activity by the couple.

Though all doubts should be dealt with before an official engagement is made, engagement should not be viewed as irrevocable. This is why a strong and mutual commitment to moral purity in this phase of the relationship is critical.