

# *Reigning Grace* **and Moral Purity**

Fleeing to Christ for freedom from Moral Corruption

*MAD*



Torn Veil Publications

# *"Reigning Grace and Moral Purity"*

## *A Study of 1 Corinthians 6:18-7:5*

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# *Preface*

Since 1951 Waukesha Bible Church (WBC) has ministered to the Waukesha community. WBC is a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based Ministry. As a fellowship we are convinced that God is honored in the careful handling of His Word and in the acknowledgment that His Son, Jesus Christ, is enough for this life and in the life that is to come. We are equally convinced that God has entrusted us with this message. It is a message of life and not death; of freedom, not bondage. We wish to take this message to the ends of the earth until worshippers from every tribe, tongue, people and nation have been gathered to honor God.

## A Word of Introduction

Local Churches have received from God a sacred trust. This trust is a mission. This mission is defined for us in Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8, and 2 Timothy 2:2. This same mission is pictured for us by the early church in the activity of the apostle Paul beginning in Acts 13:1. The mission is to duplicate herself in the lives of others. Church health is not defined by numerical size or budgetary well-being, but by the degree to which they are intentionally engaging in the reproducing of local churches. Churches birth churches. God's safeguard against doctrinal defect and pastoral apathy is through the strengthening and establishing of local churches.

## What is the Purpose of this Study?

The intent of all study is to ask the hard questions and to seek Biblical answers. Parroting standard answers without learning the truth first hand will produce an anemic faith. May it please our heavenly Father to open our eyes to the magnitude of His grace so that we might understand all that we are in His Son and all that He is for us.

## A word about Torn Veil Publications

Torn Veil Publications (TVP) is the distributing arm of WBC and exists to shout the supremacy of God in all things by finding, celebrating, and declaring that He is enough in this life and in the life to come through the systematic study of Scripture and to share Him with every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. It is all designed as part of the WBC vision to spread a Christ-Exalting, Word-Centered, Global-Impacting, Grace-Based message to others.



## **What is Moral Purity?**

"There is no slavery so base as that whereby a man becomes a drudge to his own lusts, or any victory so glorious as that which is obtained over them." (Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, 83)

### **What are the threats against moral purity?**

You and I live in a context in which we are bombarded by images of biblically inappropriate imagery. The political scene and television culture promotes moral compromise and seek to sell it as politically correct and those who would censure such activity are labeled as intolerant and hateful.

Often we find ourselves laughing our way down the slippery slope of moral compromise until we find ourselves committing grievous acts in the recesses of our minds and ultimately through the instrumentation of our bodies.

### **What are the cultural attacks that would compromise our moral purity?**

We have no restraints placed on us by our culture. Unless we heed the biblical call and embrace the innate consequences of the cross-work, we will find ourselves betraying our biblical foundations.

It is fitting for us to examine more closely the biblical call to moral purity as the outworking of the cross-work of Jesus Christ.

### **Why am I teaching this? Is this material applicable?**

In 1991, The Fuller Institute of Church Growth did a survey on "How Common is Pastoral Indiscretion?" The results were shocking. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents confessed to having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in their church. Another survey of 300 pastors by Leadership Magazine indicated that 23% admitted to having been sexually involved with someone other than their spouse. It is also reported that some large hotel chains report some of their largest revenues for adult TV channels have occurred during Christian conventions.

### **How will they best hear?**

I recently came across a statement that reads as follows, "There are only two types of people that don't struggle with lust: dead ones and liars."

In Called to be Holy by the Archbishop of Milwaukee Timothy Dolan, the author records a conversation between an older priest and a younger priest. The younger priest asks the question, "When will I stop lusting?" The older priest responded with the following answer, "5 minutes after you are dead!"

**What am I asking you to do?**

I ask you to be honest with yourself and with God. God you have not fooled, but you may have fooled yourself. Perhaps you have deceived yourself into thinking that your compromises are excusable, that somehow what you do is not as bad as the actual perpetrator of the sin. Friend, you are deceived.

Often we think we have won major wars, yet we are still giving up ground in smaller areas. We are conceding areas and by so doing setting ourselves up for event failure.

Without wanting to be flippant, our battle with lust is no respecter of age or gender, race or geographical location. Although each of us might have certain idiosyncrasies as to what we lust after and how that lust reveals itself, we are all doing battle with a lust which when left unchecked will defile us, destroy us and detach us from the people we love the most.

The issue of morality in 1 Corinthians 6:18-7:5 is defined as moral purity. It deals with personal holiness but only as it relates to the area of one's morality. It is not dealing with ethical issues like just war or cloning or labor laws.

While looking just at USA Today over 1,000 hits were found where the idea of losing one's moral compass was highlighted.

In 1995 William J. Bennett wrote, The Moral Compass. Through various literary devices he seeks to show what is right and wrong, good and bad during the various stages of one's life. It is not a book addressing sexual purity, but social and/or ethical purity. We could speak of dishonesty through speech and action in all of the various relationships at multiple levels whether it is between husband and wife, parent and child, employee and employer, citizen and state, or nations against nations, but our text deals only with moral purity as it relates to one's sexual expressions.

We live in a culture where sexuality and immorality have become blurred entities. **We are sexual by design but we are immoral by choice.** The two are not the same.

"Human sexuality is a much larger concept than sexual behavior. Its focus falls more on what people are than on what they do." (New Dictionary of Theology, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, J.I. Packer, "Sexuality," D.H. Field, 637, c1988)

We have skewed our sexuality and thus have made immorality common. I cannot begin to tell you how many shows on TV, that are either fabricated or real life, where immorality is openly displayed and not given a moments thought as to its rightness.

Joshua Harris has accurately assessed the problem with this keen observation:

"Sex is not the problem – lust is the problem. It's the enemy and has hijacked sexuality." (Joshua Harris, Sex is Not the Problem [Lust is], 12)

As individuals, we have given up too much ground to the unbelieving. Our concessions have made us unbiblical in our expressions of biblical sexuality and godless immorality. This study is a call for us to be a people who are morally pure. Morality is not an issue over which the local church can be silent. Martin Luther King, Jr. made the following observation.

"We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people."  
(Martin Luther King, Jr.)

It is possible that our silence as individuals and as a fellowship has unknowingly empowered those who have opposed biblical morality.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

There is an old story about a just man who came to Sodom hoping to save the city. He began picketing. What else could he do? He went from street to street, marketplace to marketplace, shouting, "Men and women, repent! What you are doing is wrong. It will kill you, it will destroy you." They laughed but he went on shouting until one day a child stopped him. "Poor stranger, don't you see it's useless?" asked the child. "Yes," the just man replied. "Then why do you go on?" the child asked. The man answered like this, "In the beginning, I was convinced that I could change them. Now I go on shouting because I don't want them to change me."

Friends, we must never stop warning against the horrible consequences of physical immorality.

Now let us begin to draw ourselves into the Word of God.

Let us consider again the historical context in which we find Paul's call to "Flee immorality."

The sexual immorality of Corinth was so internationally well-known that the expression, "to act like the Corinthian," was descriptive of the immoral condition of the city. It came to mean "to practice fornication." Corinth stood

for everything that is sinful. The city was the center of immorality with the Aphrodite temple, the Greek goddess of love, and its 1,000 prostitutes who came down into the city from their mountain temple at night. Greek plays commonly portrayed a citizen of Corinth as either a drunk or a prostitute. It is interesting to note that the heathen idolatry and gross sexual immorality that Paul described in Romans 1:18-27 he wrote while in Corinth.

"Corinth was perhaps the most wicked city of that day, and the Christians needed to be particularly careful." (Earle, Word Meanings in the New Testament, 227).

When you consider the letters that were written from the city of Corinth and the messages they contain, it adds much to the weight of what is said. This is seen in the Thessalonian letters (1 Thess. 4:3) and Romans (Chapters 1-3).

Inside of this historical context Paul makes his initial appeal, "Flee immorality." Yet we would be foolish if we were to think that our day is any less wicked than their day.

I recognize the difficulty that can exist in trying to communicate the issue of morality to a mixed audience both by way of gender and age. However, I do believe the Scripture deals with these areas in a sensitive way and it is necessary for us to hear what God wants to say.

"Scripture is overwhelmingly positive in its treatment of sexuality. The theology of creation strongly affirms the goodness of sex and give the lie to an ascetic ideal which denies its value (Prov. 5:18, 19)." (New Dictionary of Theology, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, J.I. Packer, "Sexuality," D.H. Field, 638, c1988)

There are guidelines that define what constitutes right relationships with one's self and with others and these guidelines are right because they are biblical.

### **What is the biblical idea?**

When one examines the book of Leviticus there is a specific call to personal holiness and its opposite in moral defilement. Within the book of Leviticus moral defilement is to become ceremonially unclean, to have been set apart from the nation of Israel and her God. Just the opposite is true when it speaks of personal holiness. Personal holiness is to have been set apart to the nation of Israel and for her God. Leviticus 18 is a graphic listing of the various sexual sins that can make an individual unclean or defiled. Such sexual sins separate a person from the nation of Israel and her God.

Although the capital offense of the various sins have been re-addressed under the New Covenant, their polluting capacity is no less true.

Acts 15:20

The Scripture exhorts us to abstain from fleshly lusts. When the council met in Acts 15 at Jerusalem to decide the fate of the Gentile believers as to their relationship to the Mosaic Law, there was a three-fold statement made. It is not my intent to discuss the nature of the three prohibitions, but to note how the inclusion of moral purity was accented.

“But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood” (Acts 15:20).

The exhortation to Gentile believers was for them to abstain from fornication. Fornication is the word “porneia”. The idea of abstaining is “to hold oneself off, to refrain.”

Acts 15:29

Acts 15:29 reiterates the decision of the Jerusalem council and adds the statement, “if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well.”

The word “keep” means “to watch thoroughly, to observe strictly.” It is a compound word made up of a prefix and the word meaning to guard or protect. It is used in the context of a jailor guarding a prisoner (Acts 12:5, 6, 16:23). The suggestion is that moral purity is a result of diligent intensity. It does not just happen. Those who give themselves to the task of being morally pure do well.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

This same idea is found in 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality” (1 Thess. 4:3).

A.T. Robertson correctly notes how, “Pagan religion did not demand sexual purity of its devotees, the gods and goddesses being grossly immoral. Priestesses were in the temples for the service of the men who came.” How tragic that moral purity is to be the hallmark of Christian morality. This quality is becoming more pronounced as our culture becomes more anti-God.

It is God’s will for you to be morally pure. Remember how earlier I noted that, **“We are sexual by design but we are immoral by choice.”** In the outworking of my position before God, He has set me apart from immorality. His calling is for moral purity. The same words are being used for abstain and fornication throughout.



1 Peter 2:9-12

Peter also calls his audience to moral purity (1 Pet. 2:9-12). His statements are powerful. Peter establishes who we are in verse 9. He gives us the consequences of our glorious position in 9 and 10 (“So that . . .”). Verse 11 is the exhortation to persevere in the area of moral purity and why such an exhortation is needful (“They war against your soul”). Verse 12 notes how such behavior on our part is excellent and brings glory to God.

Our “fleshly lusts” war against our souls. The word “war” communicates a military campaign. The world, the flesh, and the devil are in a campaign to destroy your moral purity. Notice the language of Acts 15:29 for “keep” and that of a military campaign in 1 Peter. There is intensity in the language used. This Scriptural idea is no less prominent in 1 Corinthians 6:18 and following.

Under the New Covenant, our union with Christ guarantees the certainty of our relationship to Him, yet the polluting impact of sexual sins is no less damaging. Their damage, however, expresses itself in ways that are different (Capital Punishment) than inside of a theocratic nation. We do well to understand the crippling power of sexual sins penetrating hold that it has on the perpetrator of the sin. It is for this reason our text calls us to “Flee immorality.”

Before we attempt to define immorality I would like us to ask the question, “What is morality?” When you begin looking at a definition for morality, you start to find an enormous body of literature that wrestles with the idea from a philosophical perspective, yet without the wrangling let us agree that we can determine what is or is not moral.

Morality cannot be determined by one’s conscience. Many in our present culture have no conscience as it relates to morality. It is pleasure driven and sensory dictated. Our conscience is only as good as the information which feeds it.

Our society struggles with the defining of morality. In a society or culture that abandons a reference point outside itself, morality becomes relative. As believers we can define what is moral because the Bible defines what is moral. Our greater cultural conscience has lost any resemblance of biblical morality. It has a morality, but it is a godless morality dictated and defined by the sinful hearts of a collective society.

Some might argue there is a danger that we will legislate morality. Friend, the issue is not can we or should we legislate morality, but whose morality will be legislated?

## *A Study in 1 Corinthians 6:18-7:5*

Let us go back to asking the question, “What is morality or what is moral?”

Here is a biblical definition of morality. Morality is defined by conformity to who God is. For example, if we take the statements of Philippians 4:8, we begin to see what biblical morality looks like.

Biblical morality is honorable, right, pure, lovely, well spoken of, excellent, worthy of praise, these are the kinds of things that define for us biblical morality.

Morality is large, but it is never questionable. When the Scripture says, “Flee immorality” what exactly does it mean?

The Greek word is “porneia.” It is our English word “Porno.” We might want to believe that trying to define pornography is like trying to nail Jell-O to the wall, but moral compromise is not negotiable. If you want a definition of what constitutes pornography for a guy, let them define their compromises to you and you will get a pretty good idea of what defines pornographic material.

Joshua Harris does provide a working definition of lust when he says,

“Lust is craving sexually what God has forbidden. It makes these desires more important than God.” (Sex is not the problem (Lust is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World, 20, 21).

This is no less true for women. Your moral compromises might appear different than a man’s, but you are no less culpable and compromised.

### **APPLICATION:**

1. Be honest
  - a. With God
  - b. With yourself
  - c. With others (same gender)
2. Be thorough – no more compromise
3. Be guarded – cf. Acts 15:29, “Guard the prisoner”

# 2

## Why Flee Immorality?

The big idea in the last chapter was that biblical revelation calls us to abstain from all immorality. The problem is real and we must face it daily. There are two areas that I must address in our study on moral purity. First, “Why are we to flee immorality” and second, “What are the biblical safeguards in protecting us from immorality?” Perhaps the question is better asked by stating it this way, “How do we fight against this sin or all sin?”

Remember the historical context in which the admonition is made. In the city of Corinth the prostituting of the body was a part of worshipping false gods. Sexual defilement was seen as holiness and ministry. Some within the Corinthian church had not yet disengaged themselves from this sinful behavior. In light of this Paul gives us the following instruction. They were continuing to participate in this vile activity. They sought to justify their present activity by their past participation.

Our passage, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, opens with the admonition to “flee immorality or sexual impurity.” It then goes on to explain “why we are to flee immorality.”

From the preceding thought I am to “flee immorality” for the following two reasons, because “The body is not for immorality (porneia), but for the Lord (v. 13),” and because I have been positionally and will be practically raised with Christ (v. 14). He continues to provide a theology for moral purity in verses 19 and 20.

Flee (v. 18) is our English word “fugitive.” It is a present imperative. Grammatically it **“indicates it is to be a continual and habitual fleeing”** (Rogers & Rogers). A.T. Robertson notes how we are to “have the habit of fleeing without delay or [debate].

There is perhaps no greater illustration of this principle then what we see in Genesis 39:7-11. Joseph was bombarded by the invites of evil to partake of that which was forbidden. Potiphar’s wife was relentless. He refused then fled. Friend, we must refuse then flee.

Fornication violates Christ's rights in our bodies (verses 1 Cor. 6:13-17) and also ruins the body itself.

It is crucial for us to understand this initial idea about fleeing from immorality. **Our focus cannot be on the immorality, our focus must be on Christ. In our flight from immorality we are fleeing to Christ.**

Place your hand in the line of sight with an object. You will notice that either the object or your hand will be blurred. You cannot focus on both at the same time. If you slide your hand to the side and you track with it, you will no longer be looking at the object.

The same is true concerning your sin. You cannot look at your sin and Jesus Christ at the same time. The battle for moral purity is not an end in itself. In fact the battle for moral purity is a consequence or result. It is not a means to any relational end with Christ. It is because of Christ that you will be morally pure. Moral purity is a result of your pursuit of Him. He is the One who produces moral purity in and through His people.

We must see Jesus Christ as all satisfying. Henry Scougal makes this keen observation concerning the absolute sufficiency of Jesus Christ for His people.

"If there be so much sweetness in a drop, there must be infinitely more in the fountain; if there be so much splendor in a ray, what must the sun be in its glory!"  
(Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, 122)

Thus the command to flee from immorality is the consequence of having fled to Christ. Everything that I teach assumes this non-negotiable truth. But I must constantly remind myself and us of this glorious truth. In light of this let us look at the passage before us and note how they answer the question, "Why we are to flee immorality?"

I believe Paul's use of "body" can address two ideas: first, the individual and then the fellowship. Both are significant.

### **Immorality sins against your own body (vv. 18b, 19)**

The statement in verses 18 and following is built on the previous argument. Beginning in verses 15 and following Paul argues how the individual is a part of one body and when I sin as an individual I am sinning against the entire body.

There is always a tendency to individualize Christianity. To be sure we come to Him as individuals, but Christianity is enormously corporate, family, community, and a body. My immorality hurts me, but I am not the only one hurt by it. It affects everyone who is a believer.

It is because of my union with Christ that sexual immorality is not only illogical but abominable.

"Immorality arises within the body and has as its sole purpose its gratification" (Rogers & Rogers).

It is only as we pursue Him that the addictive nature of this sin can be broken.

### **Immorality sins against the corporate body (v. 19)**

"The church through the Spirit is God's temple in Corinth, in contrast to all the pagan temples and shrines." (Fee, 1 Corinthians, 264).

"To commit sexual sin in a church auditorium, disgusting as that would be, would be no worse than committing the sin anywhere else." (MacArthur, 1 Corinthians, 152). In fact, there is nothing sacred about the building in which we meet. To abuse our bodies with moral impurity is to desecrate the sanctuary of God.

### **Immorality sins against ownership (v. 20a)**

God's redemptive purpose saves the whole man: body, soul, and spirit. Our bodies are not secondary to God's saving activity. God saves all of us. We are not at liberty to use our bodies in ways that are in conflict with God's purpose.

There is to be a holistic approach to our outreach activity. We are not simply trying to "save souls." We are trying to save the individual in their entirety.

How we use our bodies and how we manage our bodies is a real part of the Christian life. We are stewards of this flesh and body and our handling of it is an expression of our worship before God.

"Our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells within each of us, and we are, as a result, no longer free to use our bodies apart from a recognition of the presence of the Spirit within us." (Baker Commentary on the Bible, "1 Corinthians," James A. Davis, 970).

The language used is that of buying something at the market place. As believers we are debtors to obey God, not to appease the appetites of our flesh.

John Calvin states it in this way,

"The sum is this, that redemption must hold us bound, and with a bridle of obedience restrain the lasciviousness of our flesh." (Calvin, 1 Corinthians, 20:221).

**Immorality sins against the principle of glorify God  
in every area of one's life (v. 20b)**

"Christians' bodies are God's temple, and a temple is for worship. Our bodies, therefore, have one supreme purpose: to glorify God." (MacArthur, 1 Corinthians, 152).

"The physical body is man's means of concrete service for God" (Rogers & Rogers).

It is because of all that has preceded that we are to be committed to a very fundamental principle and that principle is to glorify God in every area of our lives including moral purity and the celebration of it in the context of the marriage covenant.

**APPLICATION:**

1. Everything we have noted is rooted in who Christ is and what He has done. Moral purity is a consequence of our union with Christ.
2. Moral purity does not establish our union with Christ. It does not make you more right or holy in your standing before God.
3. Do not focus on the battle, but on Christ the author and finisher of our faith.
4. Victory over porneia addiction is only possible when we pursue Christ.
5. **Our focus cannot be on the immorality, our focus must be on Christ. In our flight from immorality we are fleeing to Christ. Are you fleeing to Christ today?**



## **Biblical safeguards**

The next question I would like us to consider in our study is, “What are the biblical safeguards in protecting us from immorality (7:1-5)?” However, before we look at the next question I need to set down two broad thoughts that form the foundation for the initial answer we will consider in this study.

### **First, keep your eyes on Christ.**

I cannot stress enough that our eyes must be on the author and finisher of our faith if we are to experience His victory in this area of moral purity. The battle against the flesh has already been won. It is not a battle of the will. God works in and through your will for the accomplishing of His end, but it is not as simple as you saying “I’ll never do that again.” You cannot do it; only God can and has. You are working from His victory, not for victory. Winning over the flesh is realizing that it is already done. It is living in light of His victory.

#### **ILLUSTRATION:**

Last Sunday (Feb. 5, 2006) many people watched the Pittsburgh Steelers win against the Seattle Seahawks in the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Superbowl contest. That is an historical fact. You can dispute the outcome; you can choose not to believe it; you can argue that neither team deserved to win; you might think the referees did a poor job calling the game; but nothing you do can change what happened. You can deny the outcome, but your denial will not alter the end. The Pittsburgh Steelers are the reigning champions in the NFL.

You could choose to live in denial concerning the Steelers winning, or you could try to make the Packers the victors, or you could think that something is lacking in their victory and you must now finish what they began, but what you should do is rest in what happened and joy in their joy.

The same is true concerning Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross and confirming resurrection. Scripture clearly sets forth the victory of Christ over the world (John 16:33), the flesh (Gal. 5:24), and the devil (John 16:11, Col. 2:15). Our battle against the flesh is done. We are now simply living out and in the victory that was accomplished.

You could live in denial and not believe it is enough, or you might want to believe that the flesh is actually winning, or you could be thinking that something is lacking in His victory and you must now finish what He began, but what you and I should do is rest in what happened and joy in His joy.

ILLUSTRATION:

A man fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down. The following conversation followed:

“Is anyone up there?”

“I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe me?”

“Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can’t hang on much longer.”

“That’s all right if you really believe you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch.”

There was a moment’s pause, then: “Is anyone else up there?”

Bits & Pieces, June 24, 1993, p. 3

Friend, there is no other option. You can either try to hang onto the branch in your own strength or you can let go and believe God.

**Second, the commands of Scripture are consequences not causes in our relationship with Jesus Christ.**

I believe we have drifted in our understanding of the commands of the New Testament. Let me set forth some basic ideas.

1. The commands of Scripture are not works of the flesh. Although we might think the unbeliever can “do” the commands, what they “do” and what we “do” are two different things (Gal. 5:19ff). The unbeliever can do all the commands of the New Testament as an expression of his old nature and the believer can do all the commands of the New Testament as an expression of his old nature. In fact, the old nature loves being religious.
2. The commands of Scripture are the fruit of the Spirit. Because of our union with Christ, the Holy Spirit works in us and through us His fruit. The question is how or when do I know that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is His and not mine. Consider the idea in Galatians 2:20, 5:22, Colossians 3:3, 4 and John 15:5.
3. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the outworking of being in Christ (Phil. 2:12, 13).
4. The commands of the New Testament are a picture of who Jesus is, what He has done, and who we now are in Him. Do you want to know what Jesus looks like? Then read the New Testament imperatives. Notice Matthew



11:28-30 and 1 John 5:3. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. His commandments are not burdensome.

5. Although the command addresses the will of man, to think you are now capable of doing what God commands would be unfortunate. You and I do what He commands because He works and wills according to His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12, 13).

“Sexual purity is clearly something only God can bring about in your life and mine. God’s standard of *not even a hint* quickly brings me to the end of my own ability and effort.” (*Sex is not the problem (Lust is): Sexual Purity in a Lust-Saturated World*, 27).

6. The commands of the New Testament are not my focus. Jesus is my focus and as I focus on Him I look like the commands fulfilled.
7. Why is there a possible disconnect between the New Testament command and your experience of obedience? I would argue that you are not focusing on Him. This entire thought is just as true in the area of moral purity as it is in the celebration of the marriage covenant as noted in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider the question, “What are the biblical safeguards in protecting us from immorality” and an answer as found in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

### **Biblical Safeguards for those who are married (7:1-5)**

God has provided marriage as a possible safe guard against immorality. Marriage is a God-ordained union, but we would be foolish if we thought marriage will solve all your problems. Marriage has its own *unique opportunities for spiritual growth*. Verses 1 and 2 note marriage as a possible safeguard to sexual immorality. Marriage, however, does not solve the problem of lust for the individual. Marriage can be a safe-guard against fornication, but if you think marriage will solve your lust problem you are deceived.

Marriage does have as one of its expressions physical intimacy. **This entire area needs redeeming.** We have allowed the world to shape our thinking as it relates to sexuality and its biblical expression.

For whatever reason, we think physical intimacy and relational intimacy are the same or that physical intimacy has only one expression. This is regrettable. Intimacy has as much to do with one’s intellect, volition, and emotion as it does its physical expression. The marriage relationship can provide a platform for relational intimacy that is unprecedented in any other relationship.

Because of who we are as image bearers, God designed our sexuality to be fully expressed in the context of the marriage covenant where our personhood and relationship is accentuated. Listen carefully to the following statement.

"Any behavior which breaks the links between sex, personhood, and relationship is symptomatic of disorder." (New Dictionary of Theology, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, J.I. Packer, "Sexuality," D.H. Field, 638, c1988)

This is exactly what the world, the flesh, and the devil seek to do. Our culture peddles human flesh as if it were a purchasable commodity, emotionally detached, and disposable.

When you go back to 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Paul reiterates and stresses the uniqueness of the marriage relationship and its physical expression. In physical intimacy we are picturing the one-flesh relationship. Our culture has debased intimacy and makes it operate on a purely physical plane. The Bible teaches us that physical intimacy is more than just sex. Physical intimacy is a celebration of our union with Christ. It is shouting the goodness, greatness, and graciousness of God in the redemption of His people.

For those of you who are married, focus on the relational side of your relationship with your spouse. For those of you who are looking to get married, focus on the relational side of your relationship with your future spouse.

The Bible elevates gender relationships. In verses 1 and 2, the Bible grants equality to women where none once existed. This whole study is genderless. It is not about stereo-types or caricatures. The Bible speaks to both genders equally.

Now, with that said, let me comment on the marriage relationship. There are two big ideas contained in this passage.

### **Honor the marriage bed (Heb. 13:4)**

Physical intimacy is not something that is to be tolerated, but rather celebrated. God approves of and provides for this level of intimacy and it is done in the context of the marriage covenant. Why did God give us this expression of intimacy? There are two basic reasons as to why the marriage bed exists: For the purpose of procreation (Gen. 1:28) and for the picturing of our relationship with God (Eph. 5:25-32). No matter how imperfect your relationship is with your spouse, when that communion is made it can picture for us what our relationship with God is to be like.

**Fulfill your responsibilities in marriage (7:3)**

God is glorified in the proper use of one's body and intimacy inside of the marriage covenant is a means God has chosen to bring glory to His name (1 Cor. 6:20). It is an expression of our individual and relational worship.

**Biblical Safeguards for those who are single (7:1, 5, 9)**

**Practice self-control (7:5, 9)**

Our word "self-control" is representative of several different words in the Greek text. The word used in verse 5 for self-control means "without restraint." It is used only twice in the New Testament (Matt. 23:25 "self-indulgence") and here. The noun is used in 2 Timothy 3:3 ("without self-control").

The word for self-control or its absence is derived from "force." The person who is master of himself is self-controlled. The one who cannot contain himself, who is lacking in power, is without control.

Self-control is to be a characteristic of the believer (1 Cor. 9:25, 2 Pet. 1:6). It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). It is a quality of being a biblical elder in the local church (Titus 1:8). Its absence is a characteristic of the unbeliever (2 Tim. 3:3).

Self-control is not joyless Christianity. Learning to curb one's appetites regardless as to their expression is a good thing. Living a life of self-control is one of the keys to living a contented life.

**Get married**

If you do not have the gift of celibacy, then by all means get married. You might say, "It sounds good, but I have no one waiting in the wings to get married." Do not despair. God is faithful should you remain single or get married. Learn to be content in whatever circumstance you find yourself.

**APPLICATION:** (Where do we go from here?)

1. Believe that the victory is yours. Do not lose sight of what is already true.
2. Be content with the spouse you have. Celebrate the relationship you already have.
3. If you cannot be single, then seek the Lord's will concerning marriage.

# 4

## **General Guidelines**

For those who find themselves slaves to their fleshly appetites I want to show you the better way. Jesus Christ is better than anything else that exists including immoral pleasure. In this chapter, we will examine the general guidelines for promoting biblical sexuality and protecting against unbiblical immorality.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

An individual filled his car with gas at a self-service gas station. After he had paid and driven away, he realized that he had left the gas cap on top of his car. He stopped and looked and, sure enough, it was lost.

Well, he thought for a second and realized that other people must have done the same thing, and that it was worth going back to look by the side of the road since even if he couldn't find his own gas cap, he might be able to find one that fit. Sure enough, he hadn't been searching long when he found a gas cap. He tried it on, and it went into place with a satisfying click.

"Great," he thought, "I lost my gas cap, but I found another one that fits. And this one's even better because it locks..."

That man's problems were not solved by his immediate solution. Neither are appetites satisfied by immoral pleasure. There is a better way. Yet what we are fighting against is nothing new. It is as old as the Garden.

Henry Scougal died in 1657. Before his death he wrote to encourage a friend and stimulate his spiritual life. What he wrote came to be known as The Life of God in the Soul of Man. It is considered to be a timeless classic. In it he wrote these words:

"I could pine and macerate my body, and undergo many hardships and troubles; but I cannot get all my corruptions starved, nor my affections wholly weaned from earthly things: there is still some worldly desires lurking in my heart, and those vanities that I have shut out of the doors are always getting in by the windows." (92)

This is what we are up against. Yet the battle for us has been won at the cross. Victory is ours. Everything we have already noted is still true. You and I cannot subtract from the fullness of Christ's work in behalf of His people.

## **Barriers**

Let me suggest three barriers that keep us from fully enjoying what is already ours.

**First**, our own fallen sin nature keeps us from fully enjoying what is already ours. Our sin nature restricts us from fully enjoying all that He is, all that He has done, and all that we now are in Him. Let us suppose you are living a consistent Christian life and let us suppose that you think you are doing really well. Even when you think everything is going great, you are still not enjoying fully what is already yours and the reason is because you have a fallen sin nature.

**Second**, our own ignorance keeps us from fully enjoying what is already ours. Our ignorance restricts us from fully enjoying all that He is, all that He has done, and all that we now are in Him. We are Bible illiterate. An emotional response of joy or happiness or contentment is a result of mind renewal. It is not a result of your circumstances. Whatever you think is making you unhappy is not the real cause of your unhappiness. Your ignorance of all that He is, all that He has done, and all that you now are in Him, is what restricts you from fully enjoying what is already yours. What you do not know will hurt you. Ignorance is not bliss when it comes to who Jesus is, what He has done, and who we now are in Him.

**Third**, our own sinful choices keep us from fully enjoying what is already ours. When we chose sin we are saying that the sin is doing something for us that Jesus cannot do. Our sinful choices say that what we have in Him is deficient. During those initial advancements into sinful choices we are turning our backs to God's abundance.

### ILLUSTRATION:

Have you ever had someone throw a ball at you only to be struck in the head simply because you were not ready to catch it or perhaps you had your back turned to the thrower? As believers when we sin God is still throwing but we are not catching. Either we are not paying attention or we have turned our backs to Him, but He is still throwing everything at us.

I recognize that this is a lot of introductory material, but it is necessary in order that we do not fall prey to legalistic nonsense. There is a big difference between the supposed Christian life and the Christ life. Just as there is a difference between gold plating and something that is solid gold.

The biblical guidelines being proposed are not legalistic. They do not make you more justified. You are not climbing the spiritual ladder of success by

embracing biblical morality. Nothing you are called upon to believe is a work of the flesh. What you are doing is pursuing Christ and as a consequence of this pursuit, you obey God, reveal Christ to a Christ-less world, and protect yourself and others from a life of pain and hurt.

Before we look at these general guidelines I believe we need to note the position we are working from, not for.

## **What we look like in Him**

### **In Christ, you and I are already holy (1 John 4:17).**

“By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

Although we can never change God’s view of us or dealings with us, it is possible through moral defilement to place ourselves in a compromised position in horizontal relationships and in our ability to have an audience before others in our ministry for Him.

God does purify His people so that through the cross we have unrestricted access before Him unconditionally (James 4:8, 1 Pet. 1:22). It is only because we are pure because of the cross we can live morally pure in an impure world. The call throughout the New Testament is to practice and portray the power of the cross in our placement positionally.

### **Because of who He is and what He has done, we will win (Jude 24, 25, 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).**

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass” (1 Thess. 5:23-24).

Our battle with lust is not to gain victory. We are not working for victory, but from victory. No matter how bruised and battered you might appear to be and how speculative the end might be, your finish is certain. Nothing can rob you of what He has secured by means of His death, resurrection, and present intercessory ministry.

ILLUSTRATION:

"In Hawaii, because of the time difference with the Continental U.S., the National Football League Monday night football game is played in mid-afternoon; so the local TV station delays its telecast till 6:30 in the evening. If your favorite team plays, you can listen to the game on the radio, which broadcasts it live. Then, because they are your favorite team, you'll watch the game on television too. If you know your team has won the game, it influences how you watch it on television. If your team fumbles the ball or throws an interception, it's not a problem. You just think, 'That's bad, but it's okay. In the end, we'll win.'"

In your battle against lust, if you are wondering how the end will look, God's team wins!

**Your failure is not final. God's purpose in and through your failure is being fulfilled (Gen. 50:20).**

When you fail, see it for what it is. Failure is pushing you to embrace your weakness and in so doing see His strength. This is not soft peddling sin or its horrific consequences, but it is putting sin in its place. Do not give sin more credit, honor, or attention than it deserves. Sin has a role and it is to function inside of its role. When you make it something that it is not, you are making more of it than you should.

"The best evidence of spiritual maturity in Joseph's life is his ability to relate all the experiences of his life, good and bad, to the sovereign will of God." (Baker Commentary on the Bible, "Genesis," Victor P. Hamilton, 37)

You are never to give up the fight, but the fight is to see Him as all sufficient and not simply to say no to sinful lusts. **Our focus is too simplistic and bland when all we do is try not to sin.** Listen to how Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

<sup>16</sup> "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, <sup>18</sup> **while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen**; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

Sin's desire is to make us look at the temporal when our victory is found in looking at the eternal.

Listen also to Hebrews 12:1, 2.

<sup>1</sup> “Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> **fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:1,2).

Again, because this is true, this is what it will look like in the lives of His people. Now let us look at what the Scripture notes as commands. These commands are addressing our ability to chose. This is what God is working in you and through you to those around you. We cannot forget Philippians 2:12, 13.

<sup>12</sup> “So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure**” (Phil. 2:12,13).

### **What He looks like in us**

#### **Run away from immorality (1 Cor. 6:18).**

Often we find ourselves having an internal struggle. We attempt to justify or argue for the validity of our immoral choices. Our greatest threat is ourselves.

Friend, God has woven into sin an inherent demerit. I do not believe God will directly punish you for your sinful choices, but I do believe you will be punished and God is the one orchestrating the providential consequences of your sinful choices. If we could see the pain involved in our sinful choices, we would never chose sin.

Sin will always take us further than we want to go, keep us longer than we want to stay, and cost us more than we want to pay. By running to Christ you are running away from immorality.

#### **Be protective of compromising situations (Rom. 14:13, 16).**

Guard yourself and others from becoming a stumbling block in their pursuit of Christ. Celebrate the genders without making provision for the flesh (Rom. 14:13). Romans 14 is not dealing with morality, but the principles it sets forth inside of the Christian fellowship are applicable to this area.



Sometimes it is possible to inadvertently be crossing lines of proper etiquette between genders. Do not let your good be spoken of as evil (Rom. 14:16). I am allowing this verse to have certain flexibility by way of application.

No matter how innocent your motive might be, you have to realize that there is always a bigger audience. In all communication there is a conflict of interests that has to be overcome. The first is what and how something is said and the other is what and how something is heard. The same is true with our actions.

No one can judge your motives, thus what you say or do have to be taken at face value. Yet such speech and actions do not operate in a neutral vacuum. Everything is being interpreted and understood in a context. The context is provided by the physical world in which we live and the world created by the sender and the receiver. This is just as true with our gestures and actions and words towards other people.

We are a family and as brothers and sisters in Christ there is a wholesome and holy expression that can exist between genders, but it must also be guarded. How heartbreaking it would be if our good intentions were used for the destruction of an individual or this body. I believe Ralph Earle states well this principle.

Although we have tremendous liberty in Christ “we should not selfishly glory in our religious freedom in such a way as to cause a weaker, overscrupulous brother to stumble and fall. True love will put the interests of others before our own.” (Earle, Word Meanings in the New Testament, 209).

**Do not yield the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness (Rom. 6:12, 13).**

We are not to allow sin to rule as king in our lives.

Do not put yourself in compromising situations. The word used in Matthew 5:29 for stumbling and in Romans 14:13 are the same.

“If your right eye makes you **stumble**, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell” (Matt. 5:29).

“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an **obstacle or a stumbling block** in a brother's way” (Rom. 14:13).

“Stumble” is our English word “scandal.” What is a scandal? The idea is that of baiting a trap; of creating a situation whereby another person might be caught. Sometimes we are inadvertently setting people up for a fall. We must be careful for them.

In our English language notice how this word plays out.

"A scandal involves widely publicized allegations of wrong-doing, disgrace or moral outrage. **A scandal may be based on reality, or the product of false allegations.**"  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scandal)

How tragic when something imaginary is brought against another person in the body of Christ. Such actions, if not guarded, would be scandalous.

I believe the idea of Matthew 5:27-30 is captured by the apostle Paul in Romans 6:12 and 13. Do not give in to sin. Stop yielding to it. The thought in Romans 6 is that we are not to place at the disposal of sin's gratification our bodily instruments. Our bodies are tools/instruments and we should resist against using them for the fulfillment of immorality.

"There can be no treaty of peace . . . nor can we expect to have our distempers cured if we be daily feeding on poison." (Henry Scougal, The Life of God in the Soul of Man, 101)

Make the hard calls – learn to say no (Prov. 1:10). Sometimes some things start out good but in time go bad. When this happens you have to say no and walk away from it.

It is like food that has gone bad in the refrigerator. No matter how much you might like the food, there does come a point when you have to throw it away.

**Know when you have crossed the line and cut it out (Matt. 5:27-30).**

I believe there are interpretive problems to Matthew 5:27-30, but the basic principle applies. Whatever is causing you to fall should be cut off. We are to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1).

"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1).

The word "defilement" is used only here (noun). It speaks of a stain. The verb is used three times in the New Testament (1 Cor. 8:7, Rev. 3:4, 14:4). 1 John 3:1-3 uses a different word, but the idea is seen. Both passages speak of promise and hope, of something that is yet future and unfulfilled. In light of this future unfulfilled promise we are to live pure lives. Both passages speak of God's people taking the appropriate actions in order to remove personal and relational stain. "A complete break is to be made with defilement." (Rogers & Rogers)

**Make a covenant with your eyes not to look at people with lust (Job 31:1).**

“I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?” (Job 31:1).

Job was an elderly believer. He made sure that when he looked at someone, his thoughts were guarded by guarding what he looked at.

It is easy to make small concessions, but such concessions lead to event failure. Although we give ground in the arena of our minds such allowances are real breakdowns and we must fight against these small allowances. Each one of these breakdowns is robbing us of a purer joy that is to be found in Christ.

**Love God first and foremost and as a result of this, love your neighbor as you would yourself (Matt. 22:34-40).**

<sup>34</sup> “But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. <sup>35</sup> One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, <sup>36</sup> ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ <sup>37</sup> And He said to him, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND. <sup>38</sup> This is the great and foremost commandment. <sup>39</sup> The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” (Matt. 22:34-40)

The point of the text “is not to distinguish faculties and powers, but to insist on a complete response.” (Earle, Word Meanings in the New Testament, 44).

**Biblical purity must fill the no of abstinence with a resounding yes of Christ’s sufficiency.**

ILLUSTRATION:

Let us say that you have a choice to make between your favorite food and something you would tolerate if eaten. Which one would you choose? For me, if I have pizza placed before me or a plate of some kind of pasta dish, well . . . the pizza would win every time. I am so satisfied with the pizza that the pasta would not stand a chance of winning. The only way the pasta would win is if something was terribly wrong.

This is the way it is with Christ. Christ is to be so satisfying to us that the choice of sin slowly loses its grip on our lives.

Often the pursuit of biblical purity is a negative proposal, but just the opposite is true. If we are not being satisfied in Christ, then our ability to resist sin becomes greatly impeded.

Why does God say no to moral impurity? Is it because He is seeking to withhold from us something that is good? On the contrary, God wants us to experience the joy of who He is that is found in being morally pure.

Your goal is not to be morally pure. If all we strive after is moral purity, then it is a fight against the will. Your goal is to seek Christ and to find Him all satisfying.

**ILLUSTRATION:**

In the Ford Motor Company's executive dining room, Henry Ford II rarely ate anything but hamburgers. According to Lee Iacocca, Ford complained that his own personal chef at home couldn't make a decent burger. In fact, no one made burgers as perfect as the ones at the executive dining room. Curious, Iacocca asked the establishment's chef to show him what he did to make Ford so happy with his burgers. The chef went to the fridge, grabbed an inch-thick slab of New York strip steak, ran it through a grinder, patted up a patty and tossed it on the grill. "Amazing what you can cook up when you start with a [ten]-dollar hunk of meat," said the chef with a sly smile.

When you have tasted what God has for us in His Son Jesus Christ, then your appetite for things created soon lose their taste.

**Finally, today's triumph is not sufficient for tomorrow's battle (1 Pet. 5:8, Job 1:7).**

Although our end is certain and although we are working from victory not for victory, the Christian life is still a battle and our opponent is out to destroy us.

"Confidence in God must not lead to slackness; the spiritual warfare that they wage demands vigilance." (Rogers & Rogers)

The devil is a relentless foe that will stop at nothing short of our demise. The devil is walking about. He is roaming with intent to devour. The devil is trying to catch you off guard.

He is a crafty opponent. It is the devil's desire to put you to the test. His mission is to destroy you and your testimony for the Lord. The devil is determined to bring you down. He is a formidable opponent. He will not give up.

When our Lord was attacked by the devil in the wilderness it says that after Satan's immediate defeat he left our Lord "for a season. (Luke 4:13)". The phrase "for a season" speaks of a measure of time. Our Lord's battle with the devil was not final. The devil left, but would return when the opportunity afforded itself to strike again.

Every day you need to be in hot pursuit of Christ.

What God is offering us is rest, contentment, and future glory. It is yours already all you have to do is believe it.

**APPLICATION:** (Where do we go from here?)

1. Be morally pure. If you are presently engaged in sinful activity, then stop. Stop making provision for the flesh.
2. If you are engaged in questionable activity, then stop. Small compromises create large falls.
3. Be accountable. You cannot fly solo when it comes to defeating immorality. You must find another person of the same gender to be your accountability partner.
4. Find your satisfaction in Christ. Jesus Christ is enough in this life and in the life to come and this includes our sexuality. Read your Bible, memorize the Scripture, get involved in ministry, attend church, and be a part of a small group.
5. Moral purity is not just about you. It is about us and ultimately Him. Let us keep our eyes on Him.