



Biblical Standards of Morality and Marriage

For Champions in Pursuit of Holiness in Life and in Marriage

What Every Disciple Ought to Know!

Biblical Standards of Morality and Marriage

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This work is dedicated to the memory of Rev Bob Swanger who graduated to glory in 1995. As my spiritual father and a true apostle to the nations, he wrote a discipleship series under the same title several decades ago. It is my prayer that the present work will meet with the same anointing around the world.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) of the Bible.

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Introduction

The 21st Century presents us with the greatest opportunities to advance Christianity around the world. The calling and responsibility Jesus has placed upon the church is enormous. Much is riding upon the maturity of every believer. Spiritual leaders agree that we must do a far better job of properly laying the foundation of the Christian faith within believers than was done in the previous century - particularly in the past four decades. This foundation must be laid in an environment of grace, love, and spiritual freedom.

What Every Disciple Ought to Know has been developed to help “thoroughly furnish” the next generation of leaders with a resource for making disciples. The units of study that follow are word-centered and will provide the ongoing training necessary for each disciple to mature and move forward in faith and effective participation within the body of Christ. They also comprise a comprehensive teaching strategy that will heighten the unity and spiritual health of the local church.

The modern world has yet to see the true church in operation; full of spiritual life and vibrancy. They have seen the old legalistic righteousness of long-established religious traditions and for the most part, they have rejected it. But it's a new hour for the church. It's time for a new wineskin. Jesus is coming soon! We must make disciples while it is still day. We must teach others all that Jesus has commanded. This is the task of every Ephesians 4 leader around the world. Our prayer is that this resource will cause you to run with the vision to make disciples of all nations.

Michael D. Gross, General Editor

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. Matthew 28:19, 20

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 KJV

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Unit 9: Biblical Standards for Morality and Marriage

CHAPTER 1 TRAINING IN GODLINESS

By Michael D. Gross

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:29

The Resurrection of Christian Character

Most would agree that the Christian witness to the world is in desperate need of a face lift. The lifestyles of many believers and church leaders have damaged Christian credibility around the world. However, this is a new day for believers to pursue godliness and holiness in their lives as well as in the church. This unit of study will present practical ways on how to live a Godly life and exemplify a Godly image to a world desperately waiting to see what a true Christian and Christ-centered family looks like.

Never before in all of history has there been such a call and need for the resurrection of Christian character. One of the most important and neglected matters of the Christian faith today is character development. The world around us has rapidly become a society of moral relativism where everyone does what is right in their own eyes. Tragically, the Christian Church has adopted much of the present worldview. It is not uncommon to see church members looking and acting very spiritual within the church while living under an entirely worldly belief system in their daily lives. The same is true of many spiritual leaders. In the Old Testament, God dealt with such an adverse spiritual climate by raising up judges to deliver His people from their hypocrisy and backslidings (Judges 2:16-19). The situation was caused by the disobedience of those under Joshua's leadership to maintain the purity of their spiritual witness under the one true God.

Then the Angel of the LORD came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said: "I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, 'I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars.' But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Judges 2:1-2

God Himself asks the same question of us today, "Why have you done this?"

Often a generation does not know God and His works because the previous generation did not truly live for God. They could not understand or obey God's admonition to separate from the world. Likewise, a significant number of believers today are having a great difficulty understanding and applying Paul's admonition to a Corinthian church overrun with division, strife, immorality and other aspects of worldly living and thinking.

And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

Although we live in the world, we do not live according to the spirit of the world, but according to the Spirit of Christ who dwells in us. Our destiny is to be conformed to the image of Christ. This means that we are to resemble Christlikeness in spirit, mind, and body. A true Christian is not in name only, but one who has a moral likeness and possesses the mind of Christ. This requires a transformation; a miraculous change that begins in the heart and alters the way we think and live our lives.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2

We could easily conclude that Christianity is a lifelong journey of stages and changes from day to day into the likeness of Christ. This involves a process of learning, understanding, and properly applying the Biblical standards and principles that reflect our Lord Jesus Christ. This will require individual discipline on the part of each believer in Christ.

Understanding Holiness and Godliness

Far too many Christians approach the pursuit of holiness and godliness from an Old Testament legal perspective. The ensuing inability to measure up to the moral requirements of the law produces fear and bondage. In addition, they give up the pursuit and become prey to the spirit of the world. Holiness, godliness, sanctification, and purity are four related words that are rarely explained or even mentioned among Christians today. Yet our understanding of these four Biblical words is paramount for healthy Christian living and a dynamic witness to the truth that is in us.

Word	Meaning	Key References
Holiness (<i>hosiotes, hagiósune</i>)	Living up to the responsibilities of being a new creature in Christ	Rom. 6:19,22; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:24; 1 Thess. 3:13; Heb. 12:10,14
Godliness (<i>eusebia</i>)	Our reverence and faith as reflected in our obedience to Christ in all aspects of our lives.	1 Tim. 4:7-8; 6:3,5,6,11; 2 Tim. 3:15; Tit. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:3,6,7; 3:11
Sanctification (<i>hagaismos</i>)	Make holy, set apart & consecrate our lives to God by the ongoing cleansing power of the Holy Spirit.	1 Cor. 1:30; 1 Thess. 4:3-4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2
Pure/Purity (<i>hagneia, hagnos</i>)	Cleanliness, innocence, modesty that denotes a freedom from the dominion of sin and a true reflection of the new life in Christ.	Matt. 5:8; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 4:12; 5:2,22; Tit. 1:15; 1 Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:22

These four words represent the primary Biblical terms for Christian morality. All directly apply to a lifelong process based upon the definitive act of Christ to break us free from the dominion of sin to live for God. Each reveals our position in Christ, our progression in Christ and our future completion in Christ. For example, the following passages reveal these three aspects of sanctification: positional sanctification, progressive sanctification and future sanctification:

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:11

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; 1 Thessalonians 4:3

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

What does all this mean for us? For one thing, it means that holiness, godliness, purity and sanctification are God's will for us. This also means that it is both the work of God and the work of God's people. Christ has broken the chains of fear and the bondage of sin. He has given us the Holy Spirit to provide the enabling power for us to live Godly lives for His glory. We are exhorted to pursue holiness and godliness.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:11

*****Pursue** peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: Hebrews 12:14***

These passages are literally imploring us to run after holiness and godliness; to press on as one who in a race runs swiftly to reach the goal. We are not to be timid about this pursuit. Our motivation is to please Him who has called us and to be a true light to the world. Our part requires the most intimate communion with Christ and a commitment to the spiritual training and discipline necessary to be conformed to His image.

The Training Begins

Discipline is a trait that is lacking in many Christians today. Most are willing to apply certain disciplines when it involves their education, occupation, or physical appearance, but fail to apply the same determination regarding their spiritual life. Has it ever occurred to us that just as an athlete or a soldier trains to build his or her skills, that we could grow much stronger as Christians by applying certain disciplines?

But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. 1 Timothy 4:7-8

Interestingly, the word for exercise (Greek, *gumnazo*) in the above passage literally means to practice or train naked in the *palaestra* or school of athletics. It refers to the vigorous exercise in a

disciplined way of either the body or the mind. The above Scripture also clearly implies that we need to be more spiritually athletic than physically athletic. It is wise and even Biblical to do regular physical exercise, but it will be much healthier to add to this twice as much spiritual training.

Twelve Basic Spiritual Disciplines

The twelve spiritual disciplines that follow are not meant to produce guilt in anyone who is struggling to grow in Christ or on the other hand to produce a legalistic or “holier than thou” attitude in those who have arrived at some sort of spiritual discipline in their daily life. These are not shared as mandated requirements, but to enrich your walk with Christ. They collectively represent comprehensive Biblical standards of practice and if exercised in the right spirit will cause a person to become stronger in Jesus. I recommend you exercise as many of them as you can during your study of this manual. Remember, as we recognize our human weaknesses, the Holy Spirit will empower us in a way we never dreamed possible. All the resources in Heaven will be opened to us. To the Lord be the glory!

1. Love the Lord.

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” John 14:21

2. Love the Family of God

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. John 15:12

3. Worship Regularly

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25

4. Commune Regularly

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

5. Pray at Least Twenty Minutes a Day

But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Matthew 6:6

6. Read the Word at Least Twenty Minutes a Day

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. John 15:7

7. Fast

"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. Matthew 6:16-18

8. Tithe, Give Offerings and Gifts

Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the LORD of hosts; And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 3:8-12

9. Share Jesus with Others at Every Opportunity

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 'who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Timothy 2:3-4

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

10. Exercise Your Gift (Gifts) to the Benefit of the Body of Christ

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

11. Stay Close to Those Who Know Jesus Through Your Ministry, Teaching Them to Walk as Jesus Walked

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17

12. Seek a New Willingness Each Day to Believe and Obey All of God's Word

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. James 1:22-25

Conclusion

This unit of study is prepared to help you (and for you in turn to help others) come to a deeper knowledge and faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to understand what it means to be His disciple. Training and discipline require effort on our part. It is God's desire for our faith to increase. It is His desire that we spring up and walk as Jesus walked!

Review Questions

- 1) Describe moral relativism.
- 2) What is one of the most neglected things in the Christian faith today?
- 3) Why did God raise up judges in Israel?
- 4) Describe a true Christian and identify what it requires.
- 5) List the four primary Biblical terms for Christian morality with their meanings.
- 6) What are the three aspects of sanctification?
- 7) What is most lacking in Christians today who want to pursue godliness?
- 8) List twelve basic spiritual disciplines that will make you stronger in Jesus.

CHAPTER 2

CHRISTIAN MORALITY

By Michael D. Gross

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-2

How Christians Ought to Walk

What more can be said about Christian morality? In Chapter 1, we learned the importance of discipline and training in the shaping of Christian character. In this chapter we will take a step further in identifying a model walk that pleases God. The above passage reveals that a moral lifestyle pleasing to God is not an optional matter for Christians. In fact, it is mandated through Christ. It is God's will that we should walk in a way that is pleasing and acceptable to Him. This involves our overall behavior and conduct. If we truly have Christ in our hearts, then this should be reflected in our speech, our outward appearance, and our actions. Unfortunately, some attempt to legalistic in their individual ideas about morality, which turns many away from the truth. On the other hand, many ignore moral standards altogether declaring that God only looks upon the heart. The exhortation is that we excel more and more in life. What will cause us to do this? It's living as we ought to live in Christ.

It is necessary that our lives please the Lord. We are not bound by some legalistic system when we are in Christ; however, we are bound by His love and the genuine desire to live in a manner that is pleasing and acceptable to Him. We need to regulate and conduct our lives to please the Lord and make Him manifest to the world. The apostles instructed the early church on how to do this because they received from the Lord how they ought to walk and to please God. Christian leaders have the same responsibility today.

Biblical Terms for Immorality

There are Biblical terms in the New Testament for immorality just as there are for morality. In like manner, believers need to understand the meaning and full impact of these terms.

Word	Meaning	Key References
Sexual Immorality (<i>porneia</i>)	Sexual activity or play outside of marriage including touching intimate parts, premarital sex, cohabitation, adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, & sex with animals.	1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Thess. 4:3; Rev. 2:14, 20

Sensuality (<i>aselgeia</i>)	Disregard of self-control & an inclination toward indulging in or arousing sinful lust.	Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 1 Pet. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:2,18
Exploitation (<i>pleonektee</i>)	Take advantage or deprive another of moral purity in order to satisfy one's self-centered desires.	1 Thess. 4:6; Eph. 4:19
Lust (<i>epithumia</i>)	Sexual desire that if fulfilled would violate God's moral law and another person's purity.	Matt. 5:28; Eph. 4:19,22; 1 Thess. 4:5; 1 Pet 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:18

Notice that three of the above terms appear in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. In addition, there is a strong plea for sanctification and holiness in the same verses.

Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

The contrast between a lifestyle pleasing to God and one that is not is very apparent. In addition, Paul is not urging unbelievers to live for God, but believers. These selected passages represent Christ's plea for purity in the church.

The Doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans

Pastor Walter Moss in his book, *Why I am a Black Pro-Life Pastor*, is both accurate and profound when he exposes the present day attack upon America involving sexual immorality.

"There is a three prong attack in this nation strategized by the devil all involving sexual impurity: 1) abortion, 2) Homosexuality and 3) Same-sex marriage are three strategies of the devil set to destroy us. When the government makes laws in opposition to the word of God, everyone's life is at stake."

Pastor Moss documents that as much as one third of the African American population has been eradicated through abortion. This is nothing short of genocide. We live in a society where sexual immorality has become commonplace and even acceptable. No wonder Paul emphatically told the Corinthian Church to run from it.

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. 1 Corinthians 6:18

The Greek word, *pheugo*, means to get away, to seek safety by flight from something abhorrent. Sadly, immoral thinking (views) and conduct have infiltrated the church. Satan's most effective

strategy against the body of Christ is to influence her from within. He likes to disguise himself as an “angel of light” and a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. 2 Corinthians 11:14-15

For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. Acts 20:29-31

Paul warned the Corinthian church and the Ephesian elders of the approaching inside attack of the enemy. He clearly reveals that it will involve those who will look like “ministers of righteousness,” but will really be wolves in sheep’s clothing. They will present a mixture of truth and error to lead disciples to themselves and away from the right path. The vast majority of Christians are able to recognize words and actions that are blatantly antichristian; however, when there is a mixture of truth and error their faith is shaken if they are not rooted and grounded in God’s word. This is especially true when it comes to issues of morality. Immorality is like the “elephant in the room.” No one wants to talk about it!

Jesus commended the Ephesian church for despising what He called the “**doctrine of the Nicolaitans**.” At the same time, He chided the church of Pergamos for those within their ranks who held the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Although there are some varying ideas regarding the exact nature of these two doctrines, both involve a strong perversion of God’s moral standards.

But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Revelation 2:6

But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. Revelation 2:14-16

Of course, the doctrine of Balaam refers to the advice Balaam gave King Balak of Moab to influence God’s people to commit adultery with Moabite women; a sinful direction that kindled God’s anger and resulted in a plague (Num. 24:14; 25:1-4; 31:16). Similarly, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans led people in an immoral direction. There are two primary views about the Nicolaitans. The Greek *nikao* means “to conquer” and *laos* means “people,” so some deduce from this that they were a 1st century sect favoring the priesthood of Rome by dividing God’s people into clergy and laity. The name can also be interpreted as “conquering or destruction of people.” This lends itself to the view that the Nicolaitans were a group within the church who apparently taught that Christians could freely practice immoral behavior because the law was no longer binding. They are often associated with Nicolas who was one of the seven deacons (Acts 6:5). The earliest support of this connection is from Irenaeus (130-202 AD), a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of John, the Apostle himself. It makes sense to see the Nicolaitans as those who claimed some kind of superior

status while permitting idolatry and immorality. This doctrine, therefore, is a form of what is called, *antinomianism*; a belief that the deeds of the flesh have no effect upon one's soul and no relation to salvation. Since righteousness is freely given by faith in Christ, Nicolaitans taught that an intellectual belief alone in this truth had a saving power. Although this teaching correctly affirms God's love, grace and mercy as the ground of salvation, it falsely adheres to a freedom of the flesh and sin in clear violation of what the Bible teaches.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Romans 6:1-2

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:11-13

The spirit of these doctrines is prevalent today both outside and inside the church. Jesus says He "hates" them! What does this mean? The intensity of His words is obvious. The Greek *miseo* has the connotation of pursuing with hatred; a detesting. Notice Revelation 2:6 reveals that the church is to detest these doctrines as well. Peter also sternly warns us against such false teachings and those who teach others in this manner. He describes them as "walking according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, presumptuous, self-willed, natural brute beasts, spots, blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions, eyes full of adultery, slaves of corruption" (See 2 Pet. 2). In addition, he explains the error and result of their condition drawing a parallel with the way of Balaam.

They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water; clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Peter 2:15-22

It's inconceivable to believe God will not react to the ever increasing practice among Christians involving, premarital sex, living together out of wedlock, pornography, profanity, homosexuality, same sex marriage and many other moral issues. Have immoral practices become so commonplace among us that voices have become silent on the issue? Where are the prophets? Where is the preaching? Where is the repentance? The words of Christ must ring in our ears once again:

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.
Revelation 2:16

Postmodernism

The 21st century has its own version of the doctrines Jesus hates and warned of and a host of modern Nicolaitans to go with it. It's been said that there's "nothing new under the sun." The secularization of American society from 1960 on with its humanistic mission of values clarification and moral relativism has now become the dominate worldview under the term "postmodernism." This worldview has a firm hold upon Christians and non-Christians alike and has overtaken the educational system for decades. What is a worldview? It's a belief system; a philosophy of life. Dr. George Barna of the Barna Research Group says, "A world-view serves as a person's decision-making filter. It has a dramatic influence on a person's choices in any given situation." The following chart reveals the alarming contrast between a biblical worldview and a postmodern one:

Biblical Worldview	Postmodern Worldview
Absolute moral truth exists	No knowledge is certain; there is no absolute truth
The Bible is accurate in all principles it teaches	Truth is what an individual or group make it; what's true for one may not be true for another; those who claim to know truth are trying to control others. "That's just your truth!"
Satan is a real being or force; not symbolic	Tolerance is highly valued – "It's okay." All religions are of equal value.
Cannot earn your way to heaven by trying to be good or do good works	Tolerance is highly valued – "it's okay."
Jesus Christ lived a sinless life	Moral relativism; everything is relative to one's own reality (subjective feelings, decisions)
God is all-knowing & all powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today	Pluralism; all religions lead to the same place

A 2009 research project conducted by the Barna Research Group revealed danger signs for those less than 25 years of age.

- 82% (71% of all adults) say they develop their own combination of beliefs rather than adopt a set proposed by a church.
- Less than 1/2 of 1% possess a biblical worldview compared with 9% of all adults and 19% of "born again" Christians.
- Only 9% of Americans who consider themselves to be Christians and say they know the content of the Bible demonstrate such knowledge through their actions.

The implications of the above research are staggering and show how a complacent church has been infiltrated and targeted for destruction.

- Christian faith is now being defined through individualism.
- A non-Christian option pitted against various Christian-based views is the popular trend.
- Dialogue, self-reflection & observation have a stronger impact on faith views than the teaching of God's word.
- Feelings & emotions now play a significant role in faith development.

The influence of postmodern thinking can no longer be ignored by the church. There are a number of Biblical warnings against getting caught up in this belief system. These admonitions are very clear when viewed in today's Message version of the bible.

Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12:2 TMSG

Watch out for people who try to dazzle you with big words and intellectual double-talk. They want to drag you off into endless arguments that never amount to anything. They spread their ideas through the empty traditions of human beings and the empty superstitions of spirit beings. But that's not the way of Christ. Colossians 2:8 TMSG

I can't believe your fickleness—how easily you have turned traitor to him who called you by the grace of Christ by embracing a variant message! It is not a minor variation, you know; it is completely other, an alien message, a no-message, a lie about God. Those who are provoking this agitation among you are turning the Message of Christ on its head. Let me be blunt: If one of us—even if an angel from heaven!—were to preach something other than what we preached originally, let him be cursed. I said it once; I'll say it again: If anyone, regardless of reputation or credentials, preaches something other than what you received originally, let him be cursed. Galatians 1:6-10 TMSG

The tools of our trade aren't for marketing or manipulation, but they are for demolishing that entire massively corrupt culture. We use our powerful God-tools for smashing warped philosophies, tearing down barriers erected against the truth of God, fitting every loose thought and emotion and impulse into the structure of life shaped by Christ. Our tools are ready at hand for clearing the ground of every obstruction and building lives of obedience into maturity. 2 Corinthians 10:4 TMSG

The Bottom Line

It is inconceivable to believe that Christians of all ages today simply do not want to please God in their lifestyles. Although this open rebellion against God may be the case with some, it's more likely that many have been taken captive by the alarming doctrines we have discussed in this chapter. One of the most tragic effects of postmodern thinking is it desensitizes its victims to the voice of the Spirit of Christ making it difficult to hear and easy to ignore the "moral policeman" inside that seeks to prevent us from falling into captivity to immoral actions and decisions contrary to God's will.

What do Christians need to do? The first thing we must do is ask ourselves these “bottom line” questions:

1. What is your relationship with Christ?
2. How do you view Scripture?
3. What is your philosophy of life?
4. Do you have a moral compass?
5. How do you make important life decisions?
6. Are you willing to fight for your faith in Christ?

Secondly, we need to take off the gloves and fight the good fight of faith. Pursuing godliness in our lives is a battle against our flesh and against philosophies that would lead us into bondage. A closer look at 2 Corinthians 10:4-6 reveals a fighting spirit detailing the actions we take and what we are fighting against.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. 2 Corinthians 10:4-6

Note the emphasis in the above verses is on warfare. In the spiritual arena, nonaggression is unacceptable. The strongholds, arguments, and philosophies (thoughts) of postmodernism and other nonchristian worldviews have been exalting themselves against Christ for a long time. Their attack against Christianity and Christian morality is relentlessness and often unchallenged. Postmodernism with all its craftiness and deception can and will be defeated according to God’s word, but not without a fight. The battle lines become even more visible and are illuminated a hundredfold when we see the actual Greek words used in 2 Corinthians 10:4-6. Notice the intensity of these words and what they are specifically targeted against.

Actions (extinction, violence, fitness)	Against (warfare, military service, apostolic hardship & danger)
<i>kathairesis</i> – (pulling down) demolish/destroy	<i>ochuroōma</i> – (strongholds) fortified castle
<i>kathaireō</i> – (casting down) lower/demolish	<i>logismos</i> – (arguments) computation, reasoning
<i>aichmalōtizō</i> – (bringing) lead away/make captive	<i>noēma</i> – (thought) mental perception, evil purpose
<i>hetoimos</i> – (being ready) adjusted, prepared	<i>parakoē</i> – (disobedience) inattention, hearing amiss

Here is a very practical attack strategy in order to begin a spiritual counterattack against the antichristian mindsets that have adversely affected the way Christians live their lives today.

- Unleash your faith against the supremacy of individualism.
- Base your faith on God's word; not on feelings and emotions.
- Reject non-Christian options.

- Activate your Christian faith.
- Stay true to the “ABC’s of Life.”

What are the “ABC’s of Life?”

1. God loves you and wants your life to have meaning and purpose.
2. Your sin separates you from God.
3. Jesus Christ is the gift God gives for your need.
4. Repent & renew your faith in Jesus Christ?

Thirdly, we need to implement sound biblical training pertaining to morality and marriage, not only for this generation, but for the generations to come. If we are going to make a real impact upon future generations, then it is essential to teach moral education in homes, churches, and private schools. The best possible textbook for a course in moral training is the Bible. Its pages go far beyond *thou shalt* and *thou shalt not* to a wealth of moral guidance and a blueprint for marriage that transforms the way we live and view things in a postmodern world. The remaining chapters of this unit of study have been designed to provide this moral training. This material was written in 1989-1990 and was effectively implemented at Evangel Christian Academy Middle School in Columbus, Ohio. Although it originally targeted young people in the 11 to 14 year old range, adults of all ages must be trained and retrained due to the vast influence of postmodern thinking. The next four chapters deal with understanding your body as the temple of God. This will be followed with four chapters detailing God’s blueprint for marriage. The moral training you are about to receive will help you make decisions by giving you the reasons behind the moral truths that have shaped Christianity for over 2,000 years. It will lay a moral foundation in you that will enable you to freely and joyfully live within these truths. Before you begin, complete the appropriate Moral Attitude Scale in Appendix 1 and then take the Moral Training Exam in Appendix 2. You will retake them after completing the study to see how it has benefited you.

Review Questions

- 1) List and describe four biblical terms for immorality. What do they represent?
- 2) Explain Satan's three prong attack against America.
- 3) List two ways Satan infiltrates the church.
- 4) Name two doctrines that Jesus hates. Briefly explain what each is dealing with.
- 5) Define a "worldview" and why it's so important.
- 6) How does a postmodern worldview differ from a biblical worldview? Compare in your own terms.
- 7) Explain ways postmodern thinking has influenced Christian thinking today.
- 8) List three things Christians and churches need to do in response to postmodernism.

CHAPTER 3

BUILDING UP THE TEMPLE MORALLY

By Susan M. Dammann

God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth...Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. Genesis 1:27, 28, 31

God created the human body and its sexuality. His creation is pure and beautiful. Our bodies are a wonderful part of this creation and, as such, are miraculously fashioned after the image of God. Sexuality is also a good thing. It is pleasurable and has the purpose of procreation. But God also gave us strict guidelines in which His gift is to be used. To be knowledgeable of these guidelines and to walk in them leads to joy and health; misuse brings about pain and destruction, often totally ruining one's whole life. The choices are ours. This chapter will help you to consider some very important choices relating to your bodies.

The Delusion of Pornography

We cannot allow ourselves the freedom to act outside the guidelines established by our Creator or we reap destruction. Pornography is one of the most prolific examples of this process. It represents a complete perversion of the beautiful creation of God, taking that which is pure and using it for evil. But what does pornography mean to you?

It is so easy to get caught up in the delusion of what pornography is and is not. Many people believe pornography is no more than a few pictures of some scantily dressed people, basically harmless, normal and not an issue to become overly concerned about. They figure it's just normal curiosity to look and it's not going to hurt anything. Besides, they feel that what they do in their privacy is their own business and they're not going to hurt anyone else by doing this. Sounds reasonable? To many it does, but that is only because they are ignorant of the truth of what pornography involves and the devastation it causes.

Just what is pornography? Generally speaking, it is sexually explicit material in magazines, books, films, websites, telephone/cell messages or music which is not of social, educational, artistic, literary, or scientific value. It can range from simple pictures of scantily clothed bodies to gross sexual perversions, i.e. homosexuality, bestiality or sex involving torture and or murder.

Pornography is found in abundance today in our society. We find it almost everywhere on the internet, in magazines, books, television, movies, dial-a-porn messages, sexting, rock music lyrics and adult book stores. The standards of our society today are much less stringent than in years past and we are seeing sexual suggestions continually thrown at us. Advertisers use sex to sell cars, jeans, soft drinks and so on. It is flashed before us at check-out counters, computers, commercials, and in the latest fashions. God never intended our sexuality to be used in this

manner. Without our conscious realization that this is wrong, is not normal, is not God's way, we can easily become desensitized and accept this way of life as okay, even good, because this is the way the majority of the world does it and it appeals to us.

But there is a real danger here, in not having our spiritual eyes and ears keenly aware of the true nature of the material we are seeing or hearing. The more we see, the more used to it we get. We become more comfortable and over a period of time we are desensitized to accept more and more explicit material without being shocked and outraged. If the magazines we see at today's check-out counters or the television shows depicting heterosexual and homosexual acts had been produced 30 years ago people would have been outraged. Today hardly anyone says anything about it. Why? It is because they have become gradually desensitized. This could be happening to you, maybe without you even being aware. We must realize that just because the world uses sex for commercial advantages, it is not God's intended use of His creation, and we are not to blindly accept and follow it. If we don't object, we are by our silence and inactivity allowing it to continue to grow worse. God has called us as Christians to stand up for godliness and to be a holding force against evil. To cheapen God's gift of sexuality to a thing sold in the market place is surely an evil thing that will work no good.

The Dangers of Pornography

Seeds of Evil

Do you realize that much of the material found on the internet, in the movies and many magazines are things which were found only in strictly pornographic films and magazines years ago? Stop and think how you have been desensitized; how much you have accepted. Then make a conscious decision, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to be alert to the sin, the lustful ideas presented to your mind by the world around you. The more strength we develop in this area, the more able we will be to resist the greater evils. These are the seeds. Don't allow them to grow within your spirit!

The world tries to appeal to our fleshly lusts. The majority of the people in the world are body-ruled and not Spirit-ruled. The Bible tells us this:

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. James 1:14-16

Our individual sexuality is good. Sex inside the parameters of marriage is a beautiful thing. It is a gift from God. God wants us to enjoy this gift, but He also, in His infinite wisdom, gave us guidelines to follow for the proper use of this gift. When these rules are followed, there is joy, peace and fulfillment. However, when Satan perverts the normal to other than what God intended, the end results are misery and destruction. Oh, be advised, Satan will try all of his tricks on you in this area. He will tell you how enticing it would be. And the Bible says there is pleasure in sin for a season, but in the end it brings forth death and destruction. Satan won't tell you that part. It is his hidden plan in all of this.

Addiction

What is so dangerous about pornography? How can it be harmful? Why isn't it okay to look just a little? In addition to the gradual desensitization which takes place from the mild materials down to the hard core, pornography is addictive. Just as the first few encounters with a joint of marijuana may make a person feel good, so it can be with pornography. It produces excitement and awakens the emotions and feelings. But those thoughts and feelings produce in us a strong lure to experience the thrill again and again. However the "thrill" experienced with the initial viewing or exposure soon becomes boring, not as exciting as the first few times, so one then needs something more explicit, more spicy to get the same excitement, continuing on and on until just viewing isn't enough to satisfy anymore. By now one is filled with so much desire they feel the desperate need to act out what they have seen, to experience physically that which up till now they have only been viewing or listening to. This is one of the primary causes of rape and incest, or of marriages breaking up because the partner involved in pornography begins demanding unnatural requests of the other. It is a very serious addiction.

Unnatural Desire

Pornography is unnatural. God intended sex to be an expression of love. But because there is no deep, loving, personal intimacy in pornography and because God is not a part of it, there is no lasting fulfillment, no enduring satisfaction. There is never fulfillment in illicit sex because there is no committed love relationship upon which the sexual act is based upon and an expression of. Sex for the sake of sex is self-centered and leaves one feeling empty. Many people keep searching for this fulfillment along Satan's path of delusion by going deeper and deeper into pornography.

There is no love in pornography nor will there ever be. Pornography is nothing more than actors or actresses performing to produce a product to sell. It is produced primarily for the profit of the producers. If there were not such a large profit in the sale of pornography, the amount of materials produced would quickly dwindle. It is not produced for love, but the profit of money only. Again, there is no love in pornography, only proven humiliation, degradation, and exploitation. Is this the way He intended for us to use the gift of sexuality He has given us?

Yet some may say "I'm not going to go that far." I'm just going to view a little internet porn, read a few magazines or steamy romance novels, or view one objectionable movie to see what it is like. Don't allow yourself to be fooled! It is dangerous to open yourself up to even a little of this direction. No one plans on ending up an alcoholic when they take their first drink or a porn addict and rapist when they take their first few glimpses. Thousands of people are now spending their lives behind bars because of rape, molestations, incest, mutilations and murders which they never would have imagined possible for them to commit when they took a few looks into pornography. Although you may never experience these extreme consequences associated with porn addiction, it is clearly an evil that produces unnatural desires which lead to much destruction.

The Christian Solution

Present Your Body Unto God

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2

Because you are a Christian and have become a new creature having the nature of God within you, will everything you want to do be okay? No! It doesn't work that way. Then how can you avoid falling into sin? In all that God has given us, he has also charged us with responsibility. We must undergo the process of change in our lives to conform ourselves to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:29

When we are born again we are just beginning the process of becoming like Christ. The Bible says we are to be just like Jesus in this world. It does not come overnight. We are to work out our salvation.

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 1 John 4:17

We are to begin the process of change. We are to examine every thought, every action, every habit, every attitude, and every facet of our lives. Root out everything which is not like Christ and replace it with a whole new way of doing things. One of the first things you should do as a Christian is present your body to God. It is no longer yours to do with as you please. Your body is now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

God is making the fact clear. What you do with your body is very important! It is the temple of God.

It is true as Christians that God gives us so many blessings, but we often neglect to realize what God gets in return. It's not an empty exchange. He gets you! He gets your body. You are no longer your own. You were bought with a price. You were a slave in sin and God went to the slave market and purchased you. You belong to Him and He has the right to tell you what you can do with your body. You are to present your body as a living sacrifice. In the Old Testament the people always came before God with a sacrifice, a dead sacrifice, but we are to come with a living sacrifice, our bodies. No longer are we to live for the desires of the flesh, but we are to fulfill the desires of God. This is only possible when we present our bodies unto God.

Present Your Mind unto God

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Philippians 4:8

What is it God wants me to do? What kind of changes must I make in caring for my body, and the things it does? The body is a needy and often unruly member. It wants to overeat, overindulge, and participate in excess. It may still have all the lusts of the flesh operating in it. The body is unredeemed. It is now your responsibility to control your body and to keep it a holy and acceptable sacrifice unto God.

How do we begin to accomplish this? It is by the renewing of your mind. You must present your mind to God. You no longer can permit yourself to think the way you used to think. Because the mind is unredeemed, it must be transformed by the Spirit of God. As an old junky piece of furniture is stripped, sanded, and repainted to become a thing of quality, so we must do with our minds. The mind itself is okay, it just gets filled with junk, i.e. impure thoughts, evil imaginations, worry, and bad attitudes. If we begin renovating one by one until we have the mind of Christ, then our will eventually will be in conformity with His. Ask yourself, "Is this how Jesus would think about this?"

As a Christian if something is not true, honest, etc., you should not think on those things. Every thought needs to be examined according to God's list in Philippians 4:8. If it doesn't meet the criteria, you should get rid of it. For instance, do you worry about things!

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:34

This is not referring to planning, but to anxious worry. Worry is saying your problem is too big for God; that there is no possible help for you in God. The Bible, however, reminds us what to do:

...casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5

Even our thought patterns which we allow to expand can become sin in our lives. If the thought does not line up with the word of God, we must forbid ourselves to think it! All actions are born out of an initial thought. If we take authority and control over evil thoughts and imaginations, we will abort many sinful actions in which we would have acted out those thoughts. If we contemplate something not pleasing to God and even entice ourselves with what it would be like and how we could arrange it, then it is much more likely to occur than if we flatly cast out the thought in the first place. You can do this by declaring something like, *Satan, I rebuke you and these evil thoughts and I refuse to consider this anymore. My mind is off limits to you. These ideas are sin and I choose to center my mind on God.* You will then avoid that area of sin from implanting roots into your life and you will be much stronger if the actual temptation ever presents itself.

Our minds are like a computer, recording all of those things which we see and hear, processing them, and bringing it forth again for our use or influence. If we are to control our thought life, we must be careful what we allow to enter our minds. We cannot allow ourselves to sit in front

of the television set or computer and watch violent acts of killings, beatings, rapes, murders, vulgarities, verbal abuse, sex, profanity, anti-Christian bias and religious ridicule, or listen to music with obscene lyrics or look at dirty magazines. What we see will affect our attitudes and behavior. For example, if you watch a sex scene on TV or computer or read a romance novel and afterwards imagine yourself alone on your first date, then those are the scenes which will probably flash before your eyes, only, this time, you are in the picture. Likewise, if you watch a horror movie of a person home alone and someone breaks in and brutally attacks them, the next time you are home alone, those may be the thoughts you will remember, only now you see it happening to you. You are now the one filled with fear. Do you see how vitally important it is to control what you see, and hear, and what you allow to enter your mind? Test it. Does it line up with Philippians 4:8? If not, you must be strong and rise up and say, no. Close the book, change the website, TV or radio channel. Refuse to go to certain places, etc. It is a battle, but you are in control of your body and you are the one who is responsible and must present yourself to God.

A New Spirit

As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby. 1 Peter 2:2

There is supposed to be a difference between the world and us; how we think, where we go, what we say and do. It must be very grievous to our Heavenly Father when there is little visible difference between the Christians and those in the world. This is why a spiritual metamorphosis or transformation needs to take place in you. As a Christian you were given a new spirit to control your body and mind. But your spirit man also must grow and mature. Although your spirit man has tremendous potential, it needs to be fed the word of God to grow and strengthen itself. If you do not feed your spirit man with the word, your body and your mind will continue to dominate you even though you are a Christian. A newborn baby has all the muscles it needs, but it is not ready to run a marathon. It must be fed, grow, exercise, and train to be strong and able to endure in the upcoming physical trials. So it is with our spirit man. You must make diligent effort to pursue the things of God. You must spend time in the word, meditating on it, going to Bible study, going to church, and associating with other Christians. We must learn from God to develop our spirits. The caterpillar needs to become a butterfly. This is why the things of the spirit should be more real to us than the natural world. We should be able to communicate with God and to know the mind and will of God. The mind of God is not hidden or obscure but it is revealed to us by God's Spirit.

Treasure in Earthen Vessels

For we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. 1 Corinthians 4:7

We cannot battle the evil forces with our own human abilities. If we intend to be victorious, we must grow up spiritually. God says your body is an earthen vessel which carries a treasure; something valuable on the inside of you to be guarded and protected. What is this treasure? The Bible says it is "Christ in you the hope of Glory."

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

Every morning when you awaken you should say, *"Jesus Christ lives big in me."* He does this in the person of the Holy Spirit indwelling you. God Almighty lives inside of you! That is the treasure you have inside your body. It houses your spirit and God's Spirit. That is why you are to be so careful about what you do with your body. You are carrying heaven's treasure inside you. Each day look into the mirror and tell yourself, *"This is an earthen vessel which carries the excellency of the power of God. My body carries a treasure; it is a temple of God".*

The Old Testament temple was adorned and the people of God took special care of it. It was the most special place on the earth because it was God's dwelling place. Now we are that temple! This has a way of changing our attitudes about our bodies, where we allow them to go and what we will allow them to do.

...always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 2 Corinthians 4:10-11

This is wonderful! It tells us that we are to manifest Christ in our mortal flesh. We are exhibiting and showing forth the life of Jesus as we live. Our bodies are not created for uncleanness but to manifest the life of Christ. It is awesome to realize that where you go this treasure goes also.

Not My Will, But Thine

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. John 6:38

Jesus did not do what He wanted to do with His body. He daily yielded up His body to the will of the Father. In the garden He prayed, "Not my will, but thy will be done." This is exactly the same process we are to follow. We need to ask, *"Father what do you want me to do today?"* This is a necessity if you want to manifest Jesus in your body and allow His life and nature to live in you. Jesus Christ is to be magnified in your body.

...according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. Philippians 1:20

When you take a magnifying glass and hold it up to the print, what happens to the print? It looks bigger. Likewise, each of us is designed to magnify Jesus Christ. When you walk into a room, you bring Jesus into that room also. If you meet with a group of people, you are bringing Jesus into them. Your life will display the very nature of God, so that when they see you they will see Jesus in action. He walks in you, talks in you, expresses Himself in you. If you are going to be a Christian the first thing you must do is deny yourself.

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. Luke 9:23

To deny yourself means you can't allow yourself to do just anything you want to do. It is important to learn to say, *"Not my will but thy will be done"*. We will often have to lay aside our plans to be the person God created us to be.

God wants to go where you go and do what you do, but He will not force you against your will. You are a living sacrifice. You must climb up on that altar every day yourself because a Christian can yield to sinful acts and attitudes. It becomes a matter of whom and what will have influence over your body. God is greatly concerned with what you do with your body because the body is made for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. It is not made for uncleanness, nor is it made for sexual sin. It was made for God Almighty and is to be a temple dedicated to Him much as they dedicated the temple in the Old Testament.

Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!
1 Corinthians 6:13-15

Conclusion

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

The responsibility upon our lives is awesome. Through our daily decisions as to how we are going to act and speak, the world will either come to know God or reject Him. We alone carry the potential for other's eternal destiny in the moment by moment, day by day decisions we make about our lifestyles. Even Christians who have witnessed sin in the lives of other "Christians" have turned from God because of the hypocrisy in their lifestyles. We cannot afford to compromise our actions and attitudes.

God allows no double standards. Our character development must be according to his standards. It is not determined by the magnificent dreams we dream, but by the decisions we make. Character is in formation daily, from moment to moment as we make choices. Can we compromise in the small things and then have the strength of character to stand for God? Only as we realize that we truly are a temple, housing the Most Holy God, do we realize the awesome responsibility we have to keep ourselves pure in every way.

Review Questions

- 1) What is meant by the word pornography? Define and explain.
- 2) How does a person become desensitized to pornography? Explain this process of desensitization.
- 3) List the dangers of pornography.
- 4) What are three aspects of the Christian solution to the question of what you do with your body?
- 5) Write a paragraph describing what it means for your body to be a temple of God

CHAPTER 4

DEADLY HABITS

By Michael D. Gross

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. 1 Corinthians 9:27

Thousands upon thousands of young people your age are engaged in deadly habits involving drugs (narcotics) and alcohol (liquor). The millions of dollars spent in the 1980's and 1990's on the "Just Say No" commercials involving top athletes and film stars and the millions currently spent on drug prevention and alcohol abuse education in our school systems have not prevented children from experimenting and getting "hooked" on these deadly substances at younger and younger ages. Drug awareness classes where you are pumped full of technical and street knowledge concerning the nature and dangers of substance abuse have not solved the problem either. Surprisingly, an alarming number of Christian families are succumbing to these two deadly habits. As a result, the Christian witness to the world is compromised. The above scripture confirms personal responsibility in subjecting the body to the Spirit of God through discipline rather than these destructive habits. Choices have consequences and the consequence for Christians is disqualification. The Greek word, *adokimos* in the above verse literally means *not standing the test, not approved, that which does not prove itself as it ought*. The purpose of this chapter is not to function as the "beer or wine police" or to judge anyone, but to introduce you to the real cause of the drug and alcohol problem, what the Bible has to say about it, and how to really say no to any involvement with these deadly habits.

The Heart of the Matter

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.
Luke 6:45

The key to the problem of drug and alcohol use lies in the heart. Therein lays good and/or evil treasure according to the Bible. The decisions faced within this realm involve what is called morality (right and wrong behavior). Although the pressures of life, a seemingly hopeless situation, a low self-worth, and peer pressure are strong influences, the moment of decision to do it or not is within the heart's domain.

God wants us to live for him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." Luke 10:27-28

When you make a decision to do drugs or to drink you must first violate your heart by disobeying its created desire to love and honor God. This is why substance abuse is not essentially a sickness, but a sin problem causing enslavement, sickness, and destruction. Although some individuals are indeed more prone to drug and alcohol abuse and developing a dependency upon them, it's the only disease or sickness that an individual can go out and buy. The medical profession has spent so much time and resources treating drug addiction and alcoholism as diseases that we now have an entire society of victims with few overcomers. No! The answer is not to violate what God has put in your heart. He has placed what could be called a "moral policeman" in your heart that tells you not to yield your body and mind to such unhealthy and deadly habits (see Romans 6). Saying no to drugs and alcohol must come from the good treasure of the heart.

But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. Romans 6:17

Spiritual Effects

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper. Your eyes will see strange sights and your mind imagine confusing things. You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. "They hit me," you will say, "but I'm not hurt! They beat me, but I don't feel it! When will I wake up so I can find another drink?" Proverbs 23:29-35 NIV

The Bible describes the drinking of intoxicating beverages (that which diminishes mental and physical control) as very harmful to body, spirit, and soul. This can also be said with certainty about the consumption of any intoxicating drug. The Bible asks, **"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?"** The response is those who spend their time drinking liquor. Without question deep sorrow, grief, misfortune, and calamity always accompany drug and alcohol abuse. Restaurants that promote "Happy Hour" are in reality promoting a lie. We hear a lot about the physical effects of drugs and alcohol, but the spiritual effects are even greater.

The Bible speaks about drug and alcohol use in the context of falling away from God. In this sense the user is deceived into believing it is right for him and others (Misery Loves Company) to do it. Often they will begin with moderation (reasonable limits) only to proceed to full blown dependency. As Proverbs 23:35 says when the user wakes he will seek to **"find another drink."**

They have struck me, but I was not hurt; They have beaten me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?" Proverbs 23:35

This is why there are no reasonable limits (moderation) when it comes to drug and alcohol use. It is always dangerous to body, mind, and spirit. Sometimes it is necessary for medical purposes to

take a prescribed drug(s), but even then such use must be closely examined. Even the Bible regulates such use:

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.
1 Timothy 5:23

For those social drinkers or "sipping saints" the Greek word *oligos* does literally mean little, small or few as far as amount goes. God's view is that alcohol is a mocker and those who indulge themselves with it are deceived and unwise.

Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise.
Proverbs 20:1

You will make an error in judgment if you begin to use drugs and alcohol, but you may wonder, as many do, what harm is there in having a little fun? The answer is nothing, unless it involves drugs and alcohol. You may not lose your physical life or even permanently harm your body with a little "fun" in the experimentation, but you may find the spiritual losses staggering.

The first thing those who use, even moderately, drugs and alcohol lose is their heart.

Harlotry, wine, and new wine enslave the heart. Hosea 4:11

If you violate your heart often enough, as was detailed earlier in the chapter, by ignoring that "moral policeman" God had placed there, then you will gradually become insensitive to His bidding for the future. Your heart is taken away and your body and mind are yielded to do that which is not right or in other words that which is for all purposes immoral. A stranger becomes your best friend and there is a further loss of spiritual alertness. The Bible directly warns us about this.

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life and that Day come on you unexpectedly. Luke 21:34

When you lose your spiritual alertness you are no longer able to recognize the presence of God let alone good and evil. This stranger alienates you from the God who loved and created you. If continued without repentance and amendment of life, you risk losing your greatest inheritance, the kingdom of God.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.
1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Although drug and alcohol use cause all kinds of physical and social grief, none of this can compare with the prospect of eternal separation from God. In the midst of such waste of physical and spiritual life, the pleading words the Lord spoke to Jerusalem ring ever so true to those who use alcohol or other drugs.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! "See! Your house is left to you desolate; "for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" Matthew 23:37-39

Seven Reasons You Should Say "No"

Reason One: There is extreme danger.

It is clear that it is most dangerous to use any drugs including alcohol. The Bible warns against it, but often the peril is not recognized until it is too late. Involvement with anything that intoxicates is a lack of wisdom.

Reason Two: It impairs human judgment.

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; Lest they drink and forget the law, And pervert the justice of all the afflicted. Proverbs 31:4-5

There are thousands of car accidents with many deaths as a result of poor judgment by drivers under the influence of intoxicating drugs. A mind clouded by the use of drugs and alcohol is functioning at far less than its God-given potential. The real tragedy is when an innocent victim suffers the deadly consequences. Organizations like MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) must be applauded for trying to do something about it.

Reason Three: It encourages others to follow.

For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. Romans 14:7

Society's emphasis on individual rights and freedoms must not cloud your responsibility to God for your personal actions and the influence of these actions upon others. The Bible cautions you against a misuse of the freedom you have in Christ.

But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 1 Corinthians 8:9-12

You are encouraged to **"take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to them that are weak."** Even a moderate use of drugs and alcohol could actually lead another to perish and this is considered by God a sin against Christ. You should say "no" to keep others from destruction.

Reason Four: It brings you under its power.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. 1 Corinthians 6:12

Most who use drugs and/or alcohol, whether moderately or liberally, say they can quit at any time they want to. They fail to realize, however, that they have been enslaved and are actually under the power of the substance. This means it controls you and not the Lordship of Christ.

Reason Five: It is evil.

The Bible says to avoid even **"the appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22)**. Even so tobacco, liquor, and drug products are continually promoted in our society. The spiritual, mental, moral and physical deterioration caused by these products, however reveals an obvious truth. These products and habits that are associated are not good, but evil. They are degrading evils to human life and you should avoid them like a plague.

Reason Six: The Bible warns against it.

"Woe to men mighty at drinking wine. Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink." Isaiah 5:22

Although the word "wine" in the Bible refers to fresh grape juice and at other times grape juice in an intoxicating form just like alcoholic and nonalcoholic beer, there are many passages warning us of its evils in the intoxicating form. 1 Timothy 5:23 is often quoted in support of Christians using intoxicants. In this passage Paul instructed Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach's sake.

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities. 1 Timothy 5:23

Even though it does not indicate whether fresh grape juice or fermented wine was intended, it does not support social drinking or use of drugs for any other than medical purpose. This is the obvious context of the verse. There exist reasonable limits for medical purposes, but the best response to the pressure for social use remains "no." This is particularly the case for spiritual leaders who are charged with being examples to the flock.

Reason Seven: It does not bring glory to God.

For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6:20

Anything that abuses the human body is wrong. The human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 6:19). You have the responsibility to treat it with honor and dignity. Drugs and alcohol destroy the temple of God. This is why the Bible teaches us the following direction on the subject:

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
1 Corinthians 10:31

Conclusion

The Bible includes real stories about the harmful effects intoxicants have upon human lives, i.e. Noah and Lot. It also includes those who took what was called the "Nazirite Vow". John the Baptist and Jesus both were under such a vow. The vow was made before birth and it included a total abstinence from intoxicants including eating anything spiritually unclean (see Numbers 6). Samson also was under such a vow, but he disobeyed and lost his strength (see Judges 13-16). If you made a commitment at or from this moment not to use drugs and alcohol, it would honor God the Father like Jesus Himself and others did. It is a much better way to live. It's better to be filled with the Holy Spirit than with intoxicants.

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,
Ephesians 5:18 NIV

As you and young people of all ages face the drug and alcohol problem head on, you need to remember these two truths: 1) God is able to completely deliver anyone by cleansing, sanctifying, and justifying (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Galatians 5:19-23). 2) Jesus said, ***"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37)***. This is the spiritual drink that will bring you the real refreshment.

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. John 7:38-39

Review Questions

- 1) What is the key to the problem of drug and alcohol use?
- 2) What does it mean to violate your heart?
- 3) What are the spiritual effects of drug and alcohol use?
- 4) What are the seven reasons you should say no to drug and alcohol use?
- 5) What was the *Nazarite Vow* and why was it important?

CHAPTER 5

MAKING A CLAIM TO GODLINESS

By Jeffrey M. and Carolyn K. Mount

The Lord does not delay and be tardy and slow about what he promises according to some peoples conception of slowness, but He is long-suffering (extraordinarily patient toward you) not desiring that any should perish, but that all should turn to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief and then the heavens will vanish with a thunderous crash and the elements of the universe will be dissolved with fire and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus in the process of being dissolved what kind of person ought each of you be in the meanwhile in consecrated and holy behavior and devout and godly qualities. So beloved, since you are expecting these things be eager to be found by him without spot or blemish and at peace in serene confidence, free from fears and agitating passions and moral conflict. 2 Peter 3:9-14 Amplified Bible

Every day of your life you are faced with decisions of what kind of person you are going to be. Decisions made today can affect indirectly or directly your way of life for years to come. For example, if you choose not to learn how to play the piano when you're 12, you can't expect to sit down at the piano when you're 20 and play Beethoven's 5th Symphony. In this chapter, you will learn that because you are a Christian the way you live is vitally important. The Christian needs to follow after a higher standard of living, have a holy behavior, and be devoted to Godly qualities.

Godliness is a Lifestyle

Attitudes

But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. James 1:22-24

It's not just our words, but the way we live that makes us Christians. This is because the way we live is a reflection of who we are following. This brings us to an important truth: Godliness is the attitude of my heart based upon my relationship with God reflected from the inside of me to the outside.

How are attitudes developed? Most attitudes develop from the natural sense realm involving the five senses. What we see with our eyes and hear with our ears are the main sources that develop our thought patterns, which in turn determines our actions. The proverb says as a person thinks in his or her heart, so he is.

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, But his heart is not with you. Proverbs 23:7

As a Christian, then, it becomes very important that you do not base your decisions concerning how you are going to live upon the trends of the times. Rather, your attitudes toward hairstyle, clothing, entertainment, and lifestyle should be determined by the Word of God. This needs to be your standard and foundation instead of what you see and hear with your natural senses. What we see and hear determine what we think and what we speak.

You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. Matthew 12:34-35 NIV

Jesus also clearly shows us that what is on the inside of man determines his actions and his lifestyle:

But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts--murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them."
Matthew 15:18-20 NIV

Externals

Now let's look at some examples. Born into King David's family was a young man named Absalom. Absalom was perfect in every way. His beauty was without question and no one could compare to him.

Now in all Israel there was no one who was praised as much as Absalom for his good looks. From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him. 2 Samuel 14:25

Every year Absalom would get one haircut and in his pride and haughtiness would weigh and sell his hair to further flaunt his vanity. Although it was not his hair that produced his attitude of superiority to the place where he stole the hearts of the people, exalted himself to the throne, attempted to murder his father, and murdered those who crossed him; the length of his hair was the outward symbol of what was in his heart. Rebellion, pride, vanity, haughtiness this was the moral fiber that was in his heart according to the Bible.

Moreover Absalom would say, "Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice." 2 Samuel 15:4

It produced on the outside the actions he lived by. Because of Absalom's lifestyle a whole nation was led into rebellion and sin.

Another example is found in New Testament times. John the Baptist was a man who was filled with the Spirit of God while he was still in his mother's womb. As he grew, he separated himself unto God and put God first by not going along with the crowd and being like everyone else. He even went away from the cities into the wilderness where he could simply put God first and give Him top priority. He dressed simply (not in the latest fashion designs) and ate plainly (locusts and

wild honey). Because of the relationship he developed with God, he came forth in a power that had not been seen since the days of the prophet Elijah.

"For I say to you, among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Luke 7:28

John the Baptist preached and lived what came from the inside out. A whole nation turned to repentance because of his lifestyle.

Taking a Stand for Godliness

We learned earlier that we make decisions each day of our lives as to what kind of people we are going to be. Absalom and John the Baptist made decisions at an early age. Their decisions affected the rest of their lives. One chose to stand for self and one chose to stand for God. What caused John the Baptist to be able to stand for God? It says in Luke 1:80 of the Amplified Bible, ***"And the little boy grew and became strong in spirit..."*** The reason John the Baptist was able to stand was because of his relationship with God. He put God's word on the inside and it caused him to live holy, acceptable, and godly in this world.

Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You! Psalm 119:11

What Makes Us Different?

The attitude of your heart should be to please God. This means your actions need to be acceptable to Him. You can only take a stand and do what is right when you know what God's Word says and have confidence in God. He loves you and knows what is best for you in the long run. This comes from having a relationship with Him; from personally knowing Him. How do we know him? One very important way is by reading His Word, the Bible. In His Word God reveals to us who He is and what He is like. When you know Him to this degree, you will realize what Paul did about life:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Then, what 1 Corinthians 3:16 tells us makes sense:

Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 1 Corinthians 3:16

We are different and our lives should be lived differently because of the price that Jesus paid to die for us. He rose again so that we might have eternal life and He lives within us so that we can show His glory to this present world.

How Do We Handle Peer Pressure?

So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:27

John the Baptist was an excellent example of how to handle peer pressure. Absalom, however, gave into peer pressure. He wanted to be just like everybody else. He wanted to please and go along with the crowd. But how can you handle peer pressure? The easiest way is by putting God first! Jesus gave us the greatest commandment. If you love God with all that's within you, with all your very being, and you study His Word and hide it in your heart, then when others try to pressure you to go along with the crowd, you can resist that temptation. You can resist it because you care more about what God thinks of you than what people think.

Great things were happening in the book of Acts. The day of Pentecost produced a unique experience and those who participated did some great things. Two men, Peter and John, were arrested for preaching the Gospel and were put on trial. Faced with a beating or even prison they were told to stop preaching in Jesus' name. If they would stop preaching they would be released on the spot, no questions asked, no beating, nothing, just go on their way. Let's read the scripture and see what was most important to them:

But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:19-20

Peter and John knew Jesus. Their decision was based fully upon their relationship with Him.

Who's Making Decisions in Your Life?

It's an easy trap to allow the sense realm of sight and hearing to determine values and priorities. This area is a trap mainly because we tend to gravitate to what will satisfy us for the moment. For this reason, we have difficulty in considering long term results and consequences.

Esau placed a high priority on a mess of pottage (food) and gave up his birthright. He surrendered his position in the family inheritance. This is because he did not have the correct values and priorities. As a result, Esau forfeited everything that was important for something to satisfy him for the moment.

See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Hebrews 12:16 NIV

Is What You See and Hear Affecting Your Choices?

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Ephesians 4:14 NIV

The Bible warns us not to be deceived by crafty, well planned schemes which cause us to bounce back and forth and trap us. Humanism puts the “self” first and most important in life. It’s a powerful force in the world today and is the anchor of the postmodern value system. Humanism is against everything the Bible and Godliness stand for. Humanism is promoted by television, internet, radio, movies, music, magazines and textbooks. It advocates a compromising value system through these avenues. It comes to this point: Who's making the decisions in your life? Is God or is humanism? You can determine this by asking yourselves the following questions:

Question one: Is most of my time being spent watching television, browsing the internet, listening to radio, reading the most recent magazines about the stars and teen heartthrobs? Or, is most of my available time spent seeking God and studying God's Word?

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth". 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV

It is very important to understand that what you do for self in this world is temporary, but what you do for God that is according to His will shall stand forever.

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.
1 John 2:17

Question two: Is more of my time spent on my cell phone and facebook with my peers than in prayerful communication with God, my Heavenly Father? What's first in a person's life becomes very critical in the midst of making decisions for life.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
Matthew 6:33

Question three: Is my time spent in church a somewhat meaningless routine, or is it something exciting for me to worship God and to fellowship with His people?

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD." Psalm 122:1

"...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25

Where Do Your Values Come From?

Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.
Matthew 24:35

There is only one thing that never changes, that's the Word of God. Godliness is produced by knowing what God's Word says and then doing it. The Bible tells us what kind of lifestyle we should have.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy

Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:29-32 NIV

The choice is set before you. The decisions are yours to make. Will you choose a lifestyle of Godliness or one of self-centeredness? As you begin to make decisions and experience the consequences of those decisions, it is extremely important that you possess the values inherent in God's Word. You may be tempted at a young age to feel like it doesn't matter. It's my life and how I dress and act is my business. This may be true unless you are making a claim to godliness:

Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments; but rather by means of good works, as befits women making a claim to godliness. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 NASB

Review Questions

- 1) What three things are necessary in pursuing a Godly lifestyle?
- 2) How are attitudes related to Godliness?
- 3) What made the difference in Absalom's life and John the Baptist's life? Explain the decisions of each.
- 4) How should you handle peer pressure?
- 5) What three questions will determine who has the strongest influence (God or humanism) upon your decisions in life?

CHAPTER 6

THE SEARCH FOR INNOCENCE

By Sandra R. Gleespen

Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.
Mark 10:15 NASB

God puts in a very high place the innocence of a child. He even goes so far as to say that without that innocence we cannot be a part of His kingdom. In this chapter we will be learning what this innocence is; how our innocence is lost; and finally, how our innocence is protected and restored when it is lost?

God created us in three parts: spirit, soul and body.

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

The spirit is the part of man that hears from God and communicates with him. The Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit.

But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Romans 8:9-10

The soul is commonly understood as being our thoughts, emotions, intelligence and personality.

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:11 NIV

The body is the physical moving and breathing part of man.

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, Romans 12:4

We will examine our innocence separately in each of these areas. Although separate, they directly affect one another. The body cannot be hurt without damage being done to the soul or spirit. Likewise, if the soul departs from God, it will also move the body and spirit away from God. Just the same, when the spirit is restored so also is the soul and body. Throughout this chapter we will seek to discover our own innocence, learning to protect it and respect the innocence of others.

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves. Matthew 10:16 NASB

The Birth of Innocence

Creation of Man

God made man in his own image, to rule over the other creatures of the earth. Of this special creation He said it was very good. Genesis 1:26-31 NASB

Before man sinned, he lived in purity and innocence. We can appreciate this when we learn of Adam and Eve's reaction to their bodies after sin had opened their eyes for the first time to evil through their disobedience.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. Genesis 3:7

Our bodies, also, are precious to God. Psalm 139:13-14 explains the wonder of how God forms us in our mother's womb.

For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. Psalm 139:13-14

As we realize how special and lovely our bodies are in God's sight, we will be more accepting of ourselves and less critical of others. When we make fun of another person's body, we insult the creator even more than the creation.

But now, O LORD, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand. Isaiah 64:8

Acquire Wisdom

And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. Mark 9:42 NASB

Why do you think Jesus was so protective of what is taught the little child? With total openness the little child learns from everything he does. The innocent child trusts everyone and believes anything he is told. Read Proverbs, chapter 4. God here shows us the type of instruction He desires to instill in the mind of the innocent child. **"Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!" (Proverbs 4:5a NASB).** Throughout the book of Proverbs wisdom is personified as the female side of God. Here in chapter 4 she is the loving mother: **"Do not forsake her, and she will guard you; Love her, and she will watch over you".** God wishes us to receive His wisdom and let her mother us and protect us. If we follow after her, we will come under her care.

The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding. Prize her and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her. Proverbs 4:7-8 NASB

Our Second Birth

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:3-6 NASB

The mystery of Jesus' reference to a second birth has puzzled mankind since He first uttered those words. Even Nicodemus questioned the Master Himself, *"How can a man be born when he is old?" (John 3:4)*. But Jesus clearly explained that He was referring to the inner part of man, the spirit of man. *That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit (God's Spirit) is spirit (man's spirit)*.

When the Holy Spirit comes to give birth to the spirit of man, He will speak to us the truth of God.

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me." John 15:26 NASB

Our infant spirit, like a newborn baby, needs to be fed or it will not live and grow.

Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation. 1 Peter 2:2 NASB

The Loss of Innocence

The Virgin

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, By the gazelles or by the hinds of the field that you will not arouse or awaken my love, until she pleases. Song of Solomon 2:7, 3:5, 8:4 NASB

We are given fair warning throughout the scriptures of the danger of taking lightly our sexuality. The book of *The Song of Solomon*, which is called *The Song of Songs*, repeats three times the phrase not to arouse or awaken love "until she pleases." There is a proper time for love to be aroused. However, toying with arousing the desires of love before the proper time is not only dangerous, but deadly.

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. James 1:14-15 NASB

The Law of God addresses very clearly the importance of virginity before marriage. Read Deuteronomy 22:13-30 on the laws of morality. Again in the book of Acts, fornication/sexual

immorality was listed as one of only three areas the Gentile Christians were to be most careful to avoid.

...that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell."

Acts 15:29 NASB

Why, you might ask, must we subdue our natural desires? It is because we need to harness those powers that wrestle wildly within us. When we do, the control of passion produces such a beautiful strength and appreciation for love that cannot be known if the wild monster is foolishly unleashed. 2 Peter 1:5-7 gives us the progression of reaching this true love: 1) moral excellence, 2) knowledge, 3) self-control, 4) perseverance, 5) Godliness, 6) brotherly kindness, 7) true love.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 2 Peter 1:5-7 NASB

So we must make a choice. Do we want to gratify each fleeting sexual urge? Do we want to let our bodies control our total being, or do we follow the advice of the Word of God to nurture and prune our developing sexual desires into becoming a beautiful vine with ripening fruit waiting for the proper time of the harvest?

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. 2 Corinthians 11:2 NASB

The Lie

Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie... Romans 1:24 NASB

God desires to reveal the truth to us that we may successfully follow His rules for living our lives. The Bible gives us the principles to follow to lead a happy, rewarding life here on earth and to find the narrow pathway to eternal life. However, our adversary, the devil, wants to lead us toward destruction. The enemy's craftiest tool is the lie. Jesus said of the devil ***"There is no truth in him...for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44b NASB)***. One of the most effective lies is that we cannot help being under the control of sin:

"I have to have that..."

"I can't stop myself..."

"I need to have more..."

We must realize that the idea of our actions being uncontrollable is merely a lie of the enemy. If we choose to accept the lie, we will follow the lie. Jesus said, ***"and you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (Romans 8:32 NASB)***. The truth is that Jesus overcame sin and death on the cross. His death gives us power over Satan as we trust in the saving blood to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 NASB

Another very common lie of the devil is that various or multiple romantic and/or sexual experiences and partners are good and healthy. This lie has brought about more pain and suffering to our world than any other. Just look at all the abortions in America. Jesus spoke clearly on this issue, quoting from the Old Testament as well.

And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh '? "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate." Matthew 19:4-6 NASB

We should examine the comparison of the adulteress in Proverbs chapter 5 and the wisdom crying out to the sons of men in Chapter 8. Chapter 5 tells us how sweet at first a loose moral attitude may appear to be, but bitter pain and even death are the outcome.

For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, And her mouth is smoother than oil; But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, Her steps lay hold of hell. Proverbs 5:3-5

Verse 18 exhorts us to ***"rejoice in the wife of your youth."*** We must choose which path we will follow. The Lord clearly points out to us what lies at the end of each.

Dr. Richard Dobbins uses the illustration of a bandage when explaining the bonding process in romantic love relationships. The first love experience adheres firmly, as does the first application of the bandage. The second love experience loses some of its cohesive abilities, just as a bandage does if you pull it off and try to stick it on again. After numerous broken relationships, the makeup of the human heart prevents permanent bonding of any sort to take place.

For young people, the best types of relationships would involve brotherly kindness as the extent of their intimacy. Pushing close romantic relationships too early in life will nearly guarantee a life filled with broken hearts and often times an unending series of broken relationships.

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed, which amounts to idolatry. Colossians 3:8 NASB

The Harlot

Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit...For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the Kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality...Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues. Revelation 18:2-4 NASB

Throughout the Old and New Testaments the harlot has been used to personify the church in an idolatrous state. We actually hurt God whenever we, individually or as a corporate body, choose to give highest honor to another person, place or thing. The city Babylon is also used as

the detestable place of sin throughout the Word of God. Revelations chapter 18 describes the final destruction of the great city. In verse 4 the Lord pleads with His people to **"come out of her...lest you share in her plagues"**.

Christians sometimes hold the view that after they are washed in the blood of Jesus they can carry on with any type of lifestyle they choose without any consequences. The Word of God speaks clearly that we not only reap what we sow, but we also grieve the heart of our Lord and God. The prophet Hosea gives us one of the clearest examples in scripture of the pain God suffers in our unfaithfulness to Him:

"For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers, Who give me my bread and my water, My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'

"For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, And lavished on her silver and gold, Which they used for Baal.

"And I will punish her for the days of the Baals When she used to offer sacrifices to them And adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, And follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me," declares the LORD.

Hosea 2:5, 8, 13 NASB

The book of Romans is known as the Epistle of God's grace, but even here the question of right living is clearly explained:

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Do you not know that if you yield yourselves to any one as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either if sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Romans 6:1, 2, 16 NASB

I am the only one that can choose my master. I cannot blame my parents or teachers or friends. God requires each and every person to choose one master (see Matthew 6:24). How many times do we take our gifts from God and use them to go after other loves? Let us appreciate the good gifts from our Maker and use those gifts to bless Him and honor Him.

Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the Day of Judgment. 2 Peter 2:9 NASB

The Restoration of Innocence

The Prize

Read the parable in Matthew 25:1-13. Jesus speaks in the parable of the virgins and the bridegroom of our being prepared and alert. The oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. Here we see that the difference in the foolish virgins and the wise is the measure of their oil. We cannot enter into a world where the devil would like to steal our innocence without our lamps being full of the Holy Spirit.

Physically we can have only one first kiss, one first hug, and one first sexual encounter. We must, therefore, value and consider our innocence as a precious gem that can be offered to only one person. Only one person needs to fit the standard to be the recipient of our prize; therefore, do not back down in your resolution to purity for one who does not meet the standards you have set.

The mandrakes have given forth fragrance; and over our doors are all choice fruits, both new and old, which I have saved up for you, my beloved. Song of Solomon 7:13 NASB

The Keys to the Cage

Take a moment to read I John 1:8-10, Ephesians 4:30-32 and I Corinthians 13:4-7. Let us use our spiritual eyes to visualize what takes place when we follow the lies of the enemy. Picture a large cage with a huge screen on the outside. On the screen run scenes of wonderful parties and people having all sorts of hilarious fun. Many people mingle near the cage, engrossed in the happenings of the screen. One by one they are lured into a one-way door next to the screen. The door will let people in, but not out of the cage. Inside the cage are many wretched souls, wrecked and ruined by sin. They are hopeless and miserable not able to escape the life of sin to which they succumbed. Along the outside of the bars of the cage come Christians holding keys to a single open door. Jesus himself made the door and Christians share their keys. The keys are confession, forgiveness, and love through which the loss of innocence can be restored.

1. Confession

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10 NASB

The first answer to freedom is to acknowledge and confess the sin to the Lord. We must recognize that He is already fully aware of every aspect of the sin. Because of this, we need not be afraid to fully open our heart to Him in a total confession. Even if we are wronged by another, Jesus will help us sort out what part of the sin act was our wrong from which we need to repent. Then He truly is ***"faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."***

2. Forgiveness

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:30-32 NASB

Without forgiveness we will not be able to walk through the open door to get free of the cage. We will be bound in the memories of the sin act. Christ has removed our sin as far as the east is from the west (see Psalm 103:12). Can we, therefore, not forgive ourselves and others? We

measure for ourselves our own sense of forgiveness. Mark 11:26 clearly says that **"If you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions".**

3. Love

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NASB

Jesus tells us, **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34 NASB).** Why would He call it a *new commandment*? He is introducing to us an avenue of a new kind of love, the love described in 1 Corinthians 13. We cannot possibly love this way of our own accord. But **"even as I have loved you"**, we can now love.

The love Jesus offers us will enable us to view the world in the way He originally planned for us. When we receive His love we can have our innocence restored to a pure loving relationship with Him and the others we encounter. We are now able to distinguish between the false pleasures of the screen that led to bondage and the true satisfaction of the life of giving and caring experienced by those outside the cage. When we experience the genuine love God offers us we are no longer tempted by the cheap substitutes of worldly lusts.

Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:24 NASB

The New Covenant

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers On the day when I took them by the hand To lead them out of the land of Egypt; For they did not continue in My covenant, And I did not care for them, says the Lord. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel After those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their minds, And I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, And they shall be My people. "And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, And everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' For all shall know Me, From the least to the greatest of them. "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, And I will remember their sins no more." When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. Hebrews 8:7-13 NASB

Read Hebrews 8:7-13. Jesus ushered in **"a better covenant; which has been enacted on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6 NASB).** The law made nothing perfect, but only showed us our lawlessness. Now let us compare our old life under the law with the life of grace. Under the law the people were instructed to give a tenth of their income (Leviticus 27:30) and specific offerings for various reasons (Leviticus 1-6). Under the new covenant, however, **"not one of them claimed anything belonging to him was his own" (Acts 4:32 NASB).** Under the old covenant certain

times were set aside for prayer, often repetitious (see Daniel 6:13, Matthew 6:5-7). Under the new covenant we see a life in prayer as we are told to **"pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17)**. Under the law the Sabbath was a day specially designated for the Lord (see Exodus 20:10). With the new covenant we are instructed to take up our cross daily to follow Christ (see Luke 9:23). Indeed Jesus told the people in Matthew 5:20:

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:20 NASB

But if we could not keep the Law of Moses, you might ask, how can we possibly keep an even stricter law? There is only one way for us to follow the new covenant's law of grace. Hebrews 9:17 tells us that **"a covenant is valid only when men are dead. For it is never in force while the one who made it lives"**.

Jesus died to enact the new covenant, but if we are to enter into the covenant with Him we must also die to our present life.

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:3-11 NASB

In Luke 9:24 Jesus also explains to us, **"whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."** How do we practically go about dying this way? First we must recognize the lie that would convince us if we give everything to the Lord we will be deprived of all sorts of fun and enjoyment in life. Nothing could be further from the truth. God our Father loves us more than anyone, even more than we love ourselves. He desires for us to be truly happy, fulfilled in life and satisfied in doing many wonderfully creative things. But we must choose to put our complete trust in doing and being everything that God wants for us. Once we get to a place of complete trust, we need merely to follow the two great commandments of which Jesus spoke:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:37, 39 NASB

Too often, Christians continue to keep track of how much they do or give to the Lord, limiting the place He holds in their lives. This is like it was under the old covenant of the law. Under grace we are not free to do anything we please, as we would like to think, but are given the grace to love limitlessly. When we hold back certain areas of our lives to manage in our own way, we end up frustrated and often times in defeat. But if we ask God for direction in **every area** of our lives,

He will show us a way that brings us back to the intended purpose for which we were designed and that includes our sexuality.

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Romans 12:1 NASB

Conclusion

For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances. Ezekiel 36:24-27 NASB

God created us with a beautiful innocence. Through disobedience and sin our innocence is robbed from us, turning us away from God and His best plans for us. But we have hope no matter how far away from God we may come to be. Even when we become hardened by broken relationships and are hurt by tattered hearts and lives He **"will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh"**.

To best guard our innocence we need to be aware that the world is run by lies seeking to distort our vision of who God is and how He wants to guide and protect us. We need to become familiar with the biblical principles offered us to **"test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1)**. In order to protect our sexual innocence we need to be committed to upholding godly standards, understanding they are designed for our protection and well-being.

In a dating relationship it is the man's responsibility to love and protect the vulnerability of the weaker vessel.

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7 NASB

When God pronounced the curse at the fall of man, He said to the woman, **"Yet your desire shall be for your husband" (Genesis 3:16 NASB)**. A woman desires to please and to be loved by a man. She may be misled, therefore, into a physical relationship in order to gain the emotional support of her desire. On the other hand a man is attracted to the innocence and purity of a woman, one who will award him with the prize of being her guide into the world of love and passion and sexual fulfillment. A woman must insist that the man who receives her prize (for there can only be one man to receive from her this privilege) must pay the price of commitment. He must commit to her his love for life and seal that commitment with marriage vows. When a sexual relationship is surrounded by love and commitment the innocence is not lost, but restored. Physical love alone will destroy the innocence. Likewise commitment without love will violate the heart. A woman needs to be confident of the trust she can place in a man with whom she begins a relationship. If he is not worthy of your trust, he is not worthy of your company.

We are given stern warning against joining in partnership with those not believing in the need to uphold our standards for righteousness and purity.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14 NASB

God has always warned the men against marrying foreign wives lest by the physical attraction they lead the man away from the ways of God (see Exodus 34:16). We can see with the example of Sampson and Delilah how the physical attraction brought Samson to his destruction (Judges 16). David also was lured into sin by looking upon Bathsheba, another man's wife. Take note of all the death and suffering that was brought to being, simply because David entertained the desire to look, which progressed to the sin act of adultery (see 2 Samuel 11 and 12). David opened the door to the sin cage by his confession recorded in Psalm 51:1-4. Interestingly, the Psalm is titled in the following way: *For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone into Bathsheba.*

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge. Psalm 51:1-4 NIV

David forgave himself and continued even after the death of the child produced from this adulterous act, ***"So David arose from the ground, washed, anointed himself and changed his clothes; and he came into the house of the Lord and worshipped" (2 Samuel 12:20 NASB).*** Then David took the third step into godly love, not becoming bitter with the death: ***"Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and went in to her and lay with her; and she gave birth to a son and he named him Solomon. Now the Lord loved him" (II Samuel 12:24 NASB).*** So let us study God's word to find the answers to life's problems and questions. For the more we know of God the more we will become like Him.

How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:9-11 NIV

Review Questions

- 1) What are the three parts of a man? Explain each.

- 2) What is the meaning of virginity and why is it important?

- 3) What is one of Satan's most effective lies regarding moral actions?

- 4) Why is your innocence so important and, if lost, how can it be restored?

- 5) What is the responsibility of the man and the woman in a dating relationship?

CHAPTER 7

GOD'S VIEWPOINT OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

By Michael D. Gross

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Hebrews 13:4 NIV

Most of you (teenagers) will marry within the next ten year period. You have already observed both good and bad marriages. Some psychiatrists estimate that 75% of all marriages in America are unhappy. For this reason marriage counseling which began as a profession in 1929 has boomed into a large business in the 21st century. As you count the people you know who come from broken homes, the problem becomes very real. Airports are congested during holidays with children of all ages traveling to visit their biological fathers or mothers. All this has led many to frown upon marriage and opt for living together. In this chapter you will learn and come to understand how marriage was originally designed by God, how it is established, and what it is that can destroy it.

The Architect

And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man. Genesis 2:18, 22-23

American society has been drifting into a secular society in that it is neither distinctly religious nor Christian in nature. This means fewer couples are consulting the architect of marriage. The context for the above scripture verse is the creation of mankind. It is clear in creation that God established the institution of marriage. He is the architect of marriage.

You can learn much about yourself and marriage by looking more closely at the creation accounts in Genesis. There are two accounts that are only different in their purpose. The first account (Genesis 1:1-2:3) reveals the order of things while the second (Genesis 2:4-25) gives us an inside look into what it was like to be a part of God's original creation. God refers to His creation as being good six times (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). He says it was very good (v. 31) only after man and woman were created. God used not good only once and that was in response to man's aloneness. He said ***"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18 KJV).*** For those of you who are approaching manhood, you can see that God did not create you to be alone. Woman was specifically made for man. God personally prepared your mate for you. It is important for you to understand that woman was created by God and is suitable, honored, and needed in her God-given capacity.

Those of you who are approaching womanhood, on the other hand, must be careful to avoid the negative value our present society has tried to place on the traditional biblical understanding of women. The Bible does not give you a second class citizenship. You need not feel that the identity of *help meet* is less than desirable. A *help meet* refers to one who corresponds to the man, who is before his face, and is alongside of him. It is an honored position. Matthew Henry, a famous Bible scholar, perhaps, said it best:

"Woman was created from the rib of a man. She was not made from his head – to top him. Nor from his feet – to be trampled on. She was made from his side – to be equal to him. From near his heart – to be loved by him."¹

Ish (man) and *Ishah* (woman) are the Hebrew words for man and woman. Their relationship is established by God at creation. It is secure and honorable as only God, the architect of marriage, could establish it for you.

The Blueprint

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.
Genesis 2:24-25

Marriage is like building a house. You first need an architect. You learned in the previous section that God is the architect of marriage, but now we need a blueprint or a pattern before this house called marriage can take on its desired shape. Genesis 2:24-25 represents God's original blueprint for marriage. Dr. Charles Swindoll, a popular Christian author, identifies for us in these two verses of scripture the four main ingredients in God's blueprint for marriage.²

The first is what he calls *severance*. The blueprint says, ***"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother...."*** There exists a parent/child bond of dependency which must be severed. If you do not cut this cord, it will greatly hinder a new bond of dependency from sealing in the marriage relationship. Instead the old apron strings will short circuit the marriage before it has a chance to mature.

The second ingredient is called *permanence*. The blueprint continues by saying, ***"...and shall cleave unto his wife"***. Cleaving is like super glue. Once it is applied to two surfaces and joined together it must be torn apart to separate. Cleave means to *cling to, adhere to, be securely fastened to* and that takes a commitment that will last. Wars are not won by evacuations and marriages aren't either. God designed your future marriage to be permanent.

The third main ingredient of God's blueprint for marriage is *unity*. It says, ***"...and they shall become one flesh"***. This unity transcends the physical or sexual union to a fusion of total unselfishness. This is demonstrated by a willingness to blend your lives together to complete the other. This unity does not mean uniformity, which refers to being alike in all aspects. This is why many say that marriage is not so much finding the right person as becoming the right person.

¹ Leslie F. Church, ed., *Matthew Henry Commentary in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), p.7

² Charles R. Swindoll, *Strike the Original Match* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1980), pp. 21,27-37.

The fourth ingredient of marriage is *intimacy*. It is a knowledge of each other that is unrestrained and uninhibited. Your feelings and emotions, hopes and dreams, are laid bare to each other. Although intimacy obviously includes the sexual relationship, it involves the total self with a depth of communication that could be described as sacred to the couple.

God's original blueprint for marriage is rich with blessing for the union that is ordained by God. You can solve many marriage problems before they take root just by understanding this simple pattern and allowing your future marriage to be built upon its firm foundation. God's Word says that this blueprint for marriage is like Christ and the church (see Ephesians 5:21-31). The husband is to cherish and nourish his wife and the wife is to respect her husband. You can never reach this point in marriage unless it is centered in Jesus Christ. God builds the house (Psalm 127:1) by giving us wisdom, understanding, and knowledge. If you follow God's blueprint for marriage and have Christ at the center, the chambers of your house will be ***"filled with all precious and pleasant riches" (Proverbs 24:4).***

Through wisdom a house is built, And by understanding it is established; By knowledge the rooms are filled With all precious and pleasant riches. Proverbs 24:3-4

The Enemy

"For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously." Malachi 2:16

God established marriage and the family before the church and the state (government). You have seen that it was a part of creation itself and, as such, is a top priority with God, the Creator. But there exists an ageless enemy to the institution of marriage. It is the enemy of divorce.

The United States divorce rate compares with that of ancient Rome. Caesar was married four times; Pompey five. The U.S. has three times as many divorces as England, France, Finland, and Australia. It has six times more than Holland and Norway. The divorce rate over the past twenty years has given birth to an easy divorce philosophy, but there is nothing "easy" about it. You will notice that divorce is not in the original blueprint of God. Jesus says absolutely no to divorce for any reason in accordance with the original blueprint. Divorce is not there! Husbands put away wives and wives husbands. God has no part in that matter because divorce is not from God.

The Reason for Divorce and Remarriage

He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. Matthew 19:8

The Pharisees asked Jesus a very important second question, ***"Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" (Matt. 19:7)*** Jesus said it was because of the ***"hardness of your hearts"***. Do you know what happens when the heart becomes cold and stubborn? It leads to rebellion that is demonstrated by a firm and perverse adherence to your own way, purpose, and opinion. In a marriage you will become unyielding to the needs of your

spouse when you are hard-hearted. Unforgiveness and selfishness will then become the main ingredients of the marriage. The result is usually divorce, but it was not so in the beginning. "Irreconcilable differences" has become the catchall for most divorces today when the truth is a hardness of heart in one or more often both partners. The best way for you to avoid divorce is to anchor the marriage in Christ and follow the original blueprint.

Thus says the LORD: "Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'"
Jeremiah 6:16

What will you say?

The Forgivable Sin

"Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; "but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation "-- Mark 3:28-29

You can see here that Jesus calls only one sin unforgivable and it's not divorce. All other sins including divorce are forgivable. You can call divorce what it is, sin, but it cannot be treated like its unforgivable! This does not, however, provide excuses for divorce or grant anyone a license to do a thing that God hates. Rather, it provides hope for those who are caught in its destructive web.

God's grace (undeserved favor) extends to both the innocent and the guilty. Although divorce is not a part of the original blueprint and is hated by God, restoration is possible. However, if the sinful pattern is continued, sin is added to sin and others in the remarriage are caused to commit adultery according to God's word.

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." Matthew 19:9

The Bible provides forgiveness and understanding to husbands and wives involved in divorce and/or remarriage when they are caught in three kinds of circumstances. These are in addition to the untimely death of the husband or wife. In that case you are obviously free to remarry.

First, when a marriage and divorce occurred prior to salvation, there is total forgiveness.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

In these cases, you are like the butterfly. You are born again. You are a brand new person with a clean track record.

The second circumstance is when a husband or wife is guilty of sexual immorality and is unwilling to repent and live faithfully with their spouse. Jesus said, ***"... whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries commits adultery; and whoever marries her who***

is divorced commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9). The only way out of such a predicament is to repent and live faithfully with your mate. The sexual drive is one of the strongest forces within you. Although it is given by God and an intricate part of marriage, it must be controlled from the perversion associated with fornication.

Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. 1 Corinthians 7:2

It has become common practice among many today to live together with benefits prior to marriage. This is never a good idea because it violates God's original blueprint for marriage and allows a spirit of fornication to be active and continue to operate in the relationship. Just think of it in this way. A couple living together without marriage are sharing the same bed. Every time they have sex is dishonoring marriage and defiling or polluting the marriage bed according to God's perspective.

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. Hebrews 13:4 NIV

All this is brought into the marriage, if and when it occurs, unless there is genuine repentance and a serious alignment with God's blueprint. The same is true for all who engage in premarital sex as is the case with every sinful practice.

The third situation is when the husband or wife is an unbeliever and purposely leaves the believer.

But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. 1 Corinthians 7:15

Of course, many young people, especially girls, mistakenly marry unbelievers only to regret it later. Likewise, "missionary dating" or courting and marrying expecting the unbeliever to convert during or after marriage is unwise because it puts the believer at high risk of an unfulfilled and even miserable marriage. Unfortunately, this is more often than not the case. In addition, the above Scripture says ***"God has called us to peace."*** Too many believers are trapped in marriages involving spouse and child abuse and when the offending spouse departs, they foolishly welcome them back again and again in a continual cycle of abuse. This is disobedience to God's word. God warns you to marry a believer and not to be ***"unequally yoked" (2 Corinthians 6:14).*** Many Christians take this warning lightly or ignore it altogether and reap heartache later in a marriage filled with division because there is no spiritual agreement. This plays right into the hands of the enemy, the devil, who is aware of the tremendous power and authority when a husband and wife are in spiritual agreement.

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Matthew 18:18-20

Some Christians say that their unbelieving husband or wife is a great person and provider. If you are in this situation, count your blessings and follow the wisdom provided in God's word.

But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. 1 Corinthians 7:12-14

All of the above situations give much needed moral guidance to the ills of modern society. The Bible says, "God has called us to peace." (1 Corinthians 7:15b).

The Truth about Homosexuality and Same Sex Marriage

The 21st century is faced with tremendous challenges when it comes to the issues of homosexuality and same sex marriage. The fact that young people in the United States favor same sex marriage by a four to one margin is alarming; however, it's very likely that most have never been presented with the full counsel of God's word on the subject. Instead, they continue to be introduced to homosexuality and same sex marriage at an early age in public school classrooms and social media outlets. This exposure to alternative lifestyles has the goal of acceptance and tolerance of lifestyles consistent with the moral relativism of belief systems in opposition to Christianity. As of 2013, twelve states and the District of Columbia have approved same sex marriage. Overall, the percentage of citizens who disapprove in the United States has dwindled to a bare majority. As a result, "gay rights" groups are boldly spreading their gospel demanding legal approval of their lifestyle. And don't be mistaken; they are openly parading their sin and proselytizing young boys and girls.

Jerusalem staggers, Judah is falling; their words and deeds are against the LORD, defying his glorious presence. The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves. Isaiah 3:8-9 NIV

The city of San Francisco is considered by many as the homosexual capital of the United States with estimates of as many as one out of three citizens being homosexual. You can be certain that other cities are catching up around the world; however, they need to look closely at the example of the city of Sodom. Peter and Jude warn us about this; how God did not spare the ancient world or the city of Sodom that was filled with perverted and filthy sexual conduct.

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)-- then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, 2 Peter 2:4-9

...as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude 1:7

Now let's look at the truth behind this perverted lifestyle from God's perspective.

God's view of homosexuality and same sex marriage is consistent in both the Old and New Testaments. Homosexuality is a sinful and an unnatural sexual perversion that's been practiced by mankind from generation to generation.

Before they had gone to bed, all the men from every part of the city of Sodom--both young and old--surrounded the house. They called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them." Genesis 19:4-5 NIV

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJ

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the gospel concerning the glory of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me. 1 Timothy 1:8-11 NIV

The Greek words used in the above passages clearly indicate exactly what is being talked about and God's perspective on the practice.

Greek Word	Meaning
<i>sodoma</i>	Burning
<i>malakos</i>	Soft or soft to the touch in a bad sense; effeminate; in a same sex relationship
<i>arsenokoïtes</i>	One who lies with a male as with a female; sodomite; homosexual

You can also see from these verses that there are consequences for those who engage in such sexual perversion. The postmodern generation is shocked that a loving God would impose such consequences. Like one radio talk host said, "We are not a people that deal with consequences anymore." However, God does deal with consequences and it is important to understand that in moral decision-making, consequences matter.

Although the female version of homosexuality called "lesbianism" is included in the broader term, the Bible directly addresses this unnatural perversion as well.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. Romans 1:26-27 NIV

Thus far you can see from our discussion that God is clear about homosexuality and same sex marriage. Neither practice is a part of God's original creation or His blueprint for marriage. In the beginning He created Adam and Eve; not Adam and Steve. One final and the most important point of this topic is that there is hope in Christ for homosexuals. In this regard, they have the same rights as all who continue to sin against God. It is the privilege of confessing our sin to God, repenting or turning from our sin, receiving forgiveness of our sin, and living our lives for Christ. It involves being transformed or changed into the image of Christ. Christians who are against homosexuality and same sex marriage are often falsely labeled as "homophobes," but nothing could be farther from the truth. The redemptive process in Christ for homosexuals is the same as for us.

Conclusion

Every generation tends to believe it is wiser and more astute than the preceding one; however, this can only be the case when a generation embraces in faith and practice the truth of God's word. This is especially true with how a generation views marriage. This chapter has introduced you to God's viewpoint of marriage and divorce. It has also dealt with the issues of living together, homosexuality, and same sex marriage. You will need to understand the blueprint and how the house is built to have the kind of marriage God wants you to have. You can now include in your prayers your future husband or wife and his/her family.

Review Questions

- 1) Where is the original blueprint for marriage found? Write it from memory.
- 2) What are the four main ingredients of marriage? Define each.
- 3) What does the words *help meet* mean?
- 4) Is divorce okay according to the original blueprint? Explain why or why not.
- 5) What is the reason for divorce? List three situations where God provides forgiveness and understanding.
- 6) Explain God's view on homosexuality and same sex marriage.

CHAPTER 8

COMMITMENT

By Michael D. Gross

Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No? 2 Corinthians 1:17

Many marriages end because the couple never really intended or envisioned going on together for a lifetime in the first place. Although the broken marriage is many times blamed on age, inexperience, incompatibility or the catchall term “irreconcilable differences,” the fact remains that our society has developed an escapist mentality. Run! Call it quits when the going gets rough! Leave when circumstances don't go my way! These attitudes do not bring success in any endeavor and marriage is no exception. Commitment, though, does! God's blueprint for marriage calls the husband to ***“cleave unto his wife”*** and this means there must be a binding together in a commitment. The dictionary defines commitment as “to give in trust, or charge, consign for preservation, to bind or obligate by pledge or assurance.” You can see from the definition that without commitment there is no lasting permanence.

The Marriage Vow

When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it. He has no pleasure in fools; fulfill your vow. It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 NIV

Marriage vows are vows of commitment. This means God places a lot of importance on doing what you have promised to do. In fact, He tells us we should not make promises (vows) we are not willing to keep. God watches over his word to perform it (Jeremiah 1:12) and He is not pleased with husbands and wives who do not do what they promised together to do. He expects you to keep, accomplish, and guard the giving of your word.

The LORD said to me, “You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled.” Jeremiah 1:12 NIV

You have probably been to at least one wedding and have heard the couple repeat their marriage vows. The following is representative of a traditional Christian marriage vow:

I take thee to be my wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my faithfulness.

Repeating vows is meaningless in and of itself. The vow really isn't what contains commitment.

"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' ³⁴ "But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; ³⁵ "nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ "Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. Matthew 5:33-37

Notice Jesus said, ***"... "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one. (5:37).*** You can swear (vow) by heaven (5:34), by earth, or by Jerusalem (5:35), by your own head (5:36), or say "cross your heart and hope to die" and not have commitment. Your word, though, your yes, either contains it or it doesn't. When you say yes to a promise, you are making a commitment. The Bible teaches that it is a clear issue of yes means yes and no means no. A husband's yes and a wife's yes is a commitment of the highest degree. FOR BETTER FOR WORSE...TILL DEATH DO US PART!

Dear John/Dear Jane

Dear John and Dear Jane letters were popularized in this century during World War I, World War II, the Korean, and the Vietnam wars. They came to symbolize the scenario of two young people deeply in love and planning to get married only to be separated by a war. Although they agree to faithfully wait for each other, what seems to them to be an endless eternity and miles takes its toll on the relationship and particularly the commitment. The result was a Dear John/Dear Jane letter. The following two real examples speak for themselves. Although they did not take place during a time of war, they are very representative of the type of letters many service members would receive while overseas. The names have been changed to protect their true identities.

Dear John,

I hope you don't take what I am going to say the wrong way. I really still love you and care about you very much. But it is hard to have a serious relationship when you are so far away. I want to be able to go out with my friends, not just girls and have fun without feeling guilty. I just want to have fun and I can do that and still love you. It is my senior year and you got to go out with your friends and have fun. I think I deserve a chance to do the same. I can't help the fact that half of my friends are guys. I love you and want to see you again soon, but I am only going to live once

*Love Always
Jane*

P.S. Don't take this the wrong way. I just want to have fun. Me, I come first before anybody else, even you. I'm sorry but I have to put myself first or I will be living my life for other people. Right now, I want to have fun with my friends. Try putting yourself first once in a while, John, I hope you understand how I feel. I love you, but you should try to remember that you only live once.

*Love
Jane*

To Jane,

I can't see you any longer, the Lord won't allow it. He has told me to break off all relations with you, I don't know why, but I have to obey him. Yes if you're wondering there is somebody else in my life and the Lord has put us together. I would appreciate it if you would not call my any more or write me either. I know that this sounds pretty harsh but this is the only way that I can tell you.

Thanks

John

Although God can and does speak to people regarding relationships, the second example is one in which the young man spiritualizes the break off when the situation was the result of a fear of commitment. A lack of commitment is also the reason couples living together called "cohabitation couples" only last an average of twenty months. In addition, there is an increase in infidelity among those living together without marriage. Furthermore, the divorce rate among cohabitation couples who do marry skyrockets from 50% to 80%. This is why it's always important to do some basic research when contemplating such decisions in life.

Clogged Drains

"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.
Matthew 5:31-32

Over 50% of the marriages in the United States end in divorce. Many others are what could be called unhappy marriages. Even though these couples repeated marriage vows and pledged their love forever to each other, it is evident that there are some "clogged drains" in their marriages and particularly their commitment to each other. What is it that keeps a marriage from being and becoming everything God designed it to be? There are at least four things that will send commitment down the drain with the result of what Jesus called a **"certificate of divorce" (5:32)**.

The first thing is forgetting the Lord. This is a serious problem with every generation of God's people. Similarly, marriages have the same tendency.

When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you--a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant--then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. Deuteronomy 6:10-15 NIV

Public opinion can be a very persuasive force. Many say that the influence of peers is the strongest upon the life and behavior of young people. In a land of plenty, in a society of eat, drink and be merry, God's blueprint for marriage may not be the most popular idea. A large number of television programs reveal attitudes toward marriage that are void of any real commitment beyond the

moment. You need to understand that God's view and the world's view are different. In the midst of this dual gravity pull, the architect of marriage speaks very clearly the warning, ***"be careful that you do not forget the LORD ..." (6:12).***

Another thing that will usually devastate commitment is being a ***"forgetful hearer"*** rather than a ***"doer of the Word of God"***.

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it--not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it--they will be blessed in what they do. James 1:22-25 NIV

It will do you little good to learn and come to understand God's blueprint for marriage if you never put it into practice.

"Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. ⁴⁸ They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." Luke 6:46-49 NIV

Notice the stability of the house or marriage that puts God's word into practice. You may be frequently tempted as a young person by the desire to do your own thing, but in marriage doing your own thing spells disaster. Selfishness in your marriage will in time greatly weaken the initial bond of commitment. As a result, the drain will be clogged before you have a chance to be really blessed by the refreshing waters of your marriage.

A third thing that lessens commitment in marriage is a lack of accountability to God. If you do not have a fear (reverence, respect) of God, chances are you will be *fully set* to continue an unhealthy direction in your marriage relationship. You can probably identify several couples whose marriages are lousy to say the least and yet they continue on in the same miserable way and are appalled when they get less than desirable results.

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Galatians 6:7-8

The state of a marriage will always be the result of what you each have contributed to it. Just as it takes "two to tango" so it takes two to make a marriage what it is. You are fully accountable for the state of your marriage!

The fourth thing that will send commitment down the drain is Christian advice that is contrary to God's blueprint for marriage. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 the church did not speak out against fornication in their midst when a man was having sex with his father's wife (his stepmother). By not speaking out against this immoral situation the church gave the appearance of condoning what was not right. People have a habit of saying "if the church approves of it, then it's okay." Although

the Corinthian church corrected the situation which led to forgiveness and restoration of the people involved, many modern churches have succumbed to the public pressure by lowering moral standards regarding lifestyles and marriage. This lowering of moral standards leads to more tolerance (everyone's doing it), which, in return leads to approval. Be sure to evaluate who you are getting advice from. Just because everyone's doing it in Christian circles doesn't mean it's right with God. Commitment in marriage is dependent upon following God's standards of morality.

Mr. Plumber

Housewives across our country are thankful for Mr. Plumber, a liquid drain cleaner that seems to work miracles upon clogged drains. As it relentlessly eats away at the trouble spot, the kitchen sink is soon returned to its normal function. For marriages in today's culture to survive the test of time, there needs to be a strengthening of commitment. For marriage, Mr. Plumber is that which strengthens commitment.

The first and foremost thing that strengthens commitment is the example of Jesus Christ himself.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴ Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 5:22-33

After mentioning the original blueprint for marriage (5:31), the scriptures say, **"This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (5:32)**. We have the ideal example for marriage in Jesus Christ's relationship with the church. He loved and gave His life for her and continues to nourish and cherish her. You will discover a greater commitment in marriage when you experience the truth that **"He will never fail or forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5)**, and that **"with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26)**.

The best advice for young marriages today is to be Christ-centered. Marriage requires the same commitment Christ had for the church if it is going to survive the storms of life.

...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. John 13:1b

Another thing that strengthens commitment is persistence or endurance. Jesus upheld the original blueprint and the commitment to endurance between husbands and wives.

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' "and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh '? "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." Matthew 19:4-6

You need to follow what Jesus says very carefully to change from a postmodern cultural thinker about marriage to God's perspective. God is the architect. Marriage is between a male and female. There is a physical and spiritual unity in marriage under God that is unmatched by any worldly standards. Jesus concludes with this revealing statement of the permanence in a Godly marriage, **"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (19:6)**. In a Christ-centered marriage there is no reason the word divorce should ever be used in the home. Children should never hear this word from the lips of parents. Marriage according to God's blueprint was designed to last forever. This is why the Bible commands the married not to divorce.

Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

To divorce for reasons other than those discussed in chapter 7 is to abandon the will of God. You must learn to hang in there with persistence even when it is toughest.

The third thing that strengthens commitment is laying down yourself. The Bible says, **"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..." (Eph. 5:25)**. Our society has all but lost the real meaning of sacrifice. Sacrifice means giving yourself up for someone. If you do not unselfishly lay yourself down by putting the needs of your husband/wife ahead of your own, then you cannot love your husband/wife like Christ loved the church. The more self-centered your husband or wife is, the higher maintenance he/she will be in the marriage. Conversely, the less self-centered your husband or wife is, the more he/she will contribute to the marriage. The world will tell you marriage is a 50/50 partnership, but with God's blueprint husbands and wives give 100% to each other. This is true love!

The fourth thing that will strengthen commitment is to love Jesus Christ more than your wife/husband. This may sound a little strange to you. No stranger, perhaps, than the following verse:

"If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. Luke 14:26

The hate that Jesus is talking about here is by comparison. Apart from Jesus Christ you have a capability to love that is limited to human love. Scripture says, however, that **"We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19 NIV)**. Compared with the example of God's love in Jesus Christ, your human love appears as hate. If marital love were like a thermometer, the comparison between human love and God's love would be obvious. God's love would be an ideal and constant temperature while human love would be barely above freezing and with great fluctuation. This is why Jesus says, **"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." (Matt.10:37)**. You do not have to rely on the limitations of human love. Instead, when you love Jesus Christ more, you can love a

wife/husband with His kind of love. Only God's love has the unselfish committed love that lasts forever!

Conclusion

Many marriages lack the commitment discussed in this chapter. As a result, too many married couples are calling it quits because they lack the resolve to persevere and work on their marriages. Longevity in marriage greatly reduces the likelihood of divorce and a strong spiritual foundation reduces it even more (Review Statistics in Appendix VIII). A marriage without God is in the "high risk" category for failure. On the other hand, the traditional saying, "Those who pray together, stay together" is much more than another catchy phrase. A marriage committed to the Lord and to His blueprint for marriage is headed for success in all the ways God intended.

Review Questions

- 1) Define the word *commitment*.

- 2) Can you do at least one of the following exercises?
 - a. write your own marriage vows
 - b. respond to either John or Jane

- 3) What are four things that weaken commitment in marriage?

- 4) What are four things that strengthen commitment in marriage?

- 5) Explain the meaning of Luke 14:26

CHAPTER 9

MARITAL INTIMACY

By Sandra R. Gleespen

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven...a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing. Ecclesiastes 3:1, 5 NASB

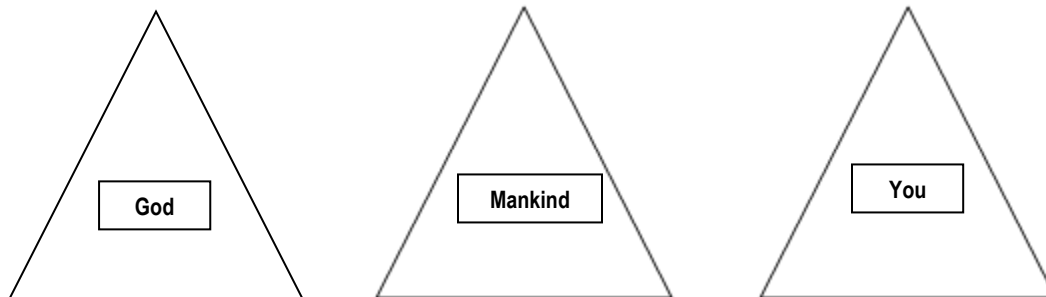
Our God is one of order and pattern. We can easily see this in how the solar system's movements are so precise. Likewise, He has a set pattern for a complete experience for us in our relationships. The planets are all unique in their properties and orbits, but they are also in tune with the rotations of other planets. Man was created in the image of God.

And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them' Genesis 1 26-27 NASB

Just how are we created in God's image? That is a very complex question, as God is more intricate than we could ever know in this life. Yet we will explore in this chapter one way in which mankind, male and female, are joined together with God, and is made in the image of the triune Godhead.

The Triangle of Man

Picture a triangle with "GOD" in the center. We will position the Father at the head, the Son and the Holy Spirit at the two bottom points. In the formation of a second triangle we will place the complete Godhead, as seen in the first triangle, at the top. To complete the triangle the husband and wife are placed at the two bottom points allowing us to complete the triangle's three sides. Now we can label "MANKIND" at the center. Each person also forms a complete triangle. This third one will have our own name as the center label. At the top point is our spirit, wherein we commune with God. The side points are named body, which is the physical side of our character, and soul or our emotions. Now take a moment and label the points of each triangle below.



We can watch the formation of the "MANKIND" triangle through the union of husband, wife, and God. We see the relationship form in man's spirit, move in his emotions and consummate in his body. But because the enemy would do most anything to stop the completion of man's triangle, we need to be warned of the dangers that would distort the whole. If we submit to the counterfeit offered in glittering array, we will be robbed of the genuine gift of a satisfying, perfect love wrapped and consummated in the oneness of God.

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that thou didst send me. John 17:20-21 NASB

Spiritual Intimacy

The First Love

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Revelation 2:4

As children it seems so easy to sing *Jesus Loves Me* and follow in the steps of our Lord and Savior. But as we grow older we find more and more pulling into a world that, for the most part, runs in opposition to the calling of God. We try to find love through relationships. We desire romantic involvements to fulfill the cravings of our maturing bodies. But when entanglements arrive too early in life and without a firm foundation spiritually, we will find ourselves trapped in situations beyond our novice experience.

The Lord desires to be our *first love*. As we find the strength and security as a joint heir with Christ, and walk in a way that is worthy of such a calling, we will become rooted in a firm, steady foundation. The Living Bible expresses this truth in simplistic beauty:

"And now just as you trusted Christ to save you, trust him, too, for each day's problems; live in vital union with him. Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him"
Colossians 2:6-7 LBV

Only when we allow ourselves to enter into a spiritual union with Christ first, can we build from that foundation the qualities necessary to sustain a godly marriage relationship. When we seek to fulfill the desires of marital intimacy without God through our mate, we demand of them more than they can possibly offer. When we try to receive from our husband or wife the level of intimacy reserved for our union with God, we tend to frighten them away. They know they can never satisfy the depth of that need, and therefore tend to back away from even the healthy unity designed for marriage.

As we build our "MANKIND" triangle we see the importance of the head being God. The proper balance in our union of husband and wife can only come as God directs the growth and movement of such a love relationship. The Lord knows that it is better to block the union of man and woman, than for it to try to function wildly outside of His spiritual leadership.

For she said, I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink, therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths and she will pursue her lovers, but will not find them. Then, she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me than now! Hosea 2:5-7 NASB

As Christ Loved the Church

*Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.
Ephesians 5:25 NASB*

"As Christ also loved the church" indicates to us many things. The book of Hebrews shows us Christ as our great high priest, the **"mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (Hebrews 8:6)**. The depths of a Christ-like love begin with a spiritual covenant. As a man desires to take a woman to be his wife, he must first enter into a covenant with her following the pattern of Christ's love for the church. To such a woman he must be willing to die to a life solely based upon self-gratification. The bonding of this covenant relationship will bring about the oneness originally intended for a man and woman. Adam was the first to be struck with awe at the experience of this depth of love when God said, **"For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh"**. The result then comes forth in Ephesians 5:28, **"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies"**. When a man surrenders himself to a woman and she in turn receives his love, they truly become one.

Ephesians 5:26 goes on to say **"that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word"**. Christ opened the veil into the Holy of Holies through the cleansing of His blood (see Hebrews 10:19-22). The husband, likewise, as the priest of the marriage covenant, through his gift of life-long love and commitment cleanses the relationship and restores the innocence to the woman he takes as his wife. She will be free to enter into the inner courts in the marriage because she will be **holy and blameless** (see Ephesians 6:27). As the husband assumes his rightful role as the spiritual leader he gains the respect of his wife. She can look to him knowing he, as her spiritual head and covering, will keep her and lead her on in righteousness. She is able then to be subject to him and respond to his guidance.

*What kind of beloved is your beloved, O most beautiful among women?
This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.
Song of Solomon 5:9, 16*

And They Shall Be Satisfied

We all have experienced at some time a craving for something. It may be for chocolates or a burning desire to succeed. As we mature we often yearn for love and intimacy. Unfortunately many people enter into a marriage simply seeking to satisfy those desires. There is one way to experience true satisfaction. That is to hunger and thirst for God, for truth, for righteousness. As we genuinely hunger to know who God really is, and feast upon the Word of God, we will find our hearts enjoying peaceful satisfaction. Unless we have come to this experience with God

individually, we can expect disappointment in our expectations for marital satisfaction. A human relationship, no matter how intimate, will not produce the satisfaction for which our heart yearns.

The book of Ecclesiastes give us the outlook of one who has experienced the best of all that the world could offer, yet turning away from God.

"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." Ecclesiastes 1:2 NASB

"I said to myself, 'Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself: And behold, it too was futility.'" Ecclesiastes 2:1 NASB

However, in the book's concluding words Solomon writes:

"The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep his commandments, because this applies to every person." Ecclesiastes 12:13 NASB

The Lord desires to bring us to a point of satisfaction in our intimate union with Him. When we reach that experience, we understand how to enjoy the gifts and blessings in all that He gives us. We must first love the giver to appreciate His gifts. Then as we enter into marriage already satisfied, we are free to reach out to please our partner. In this way we find deep joy and excitement in the marriage relationship.

Emotional Intimacy

Love is Patient

Now Jacob loved Rachel so he said, 'I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel'...So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her. Genesis 29:18, 20 NASB

Not only did Jacob serve the seven years, but he was tricked by Laban and ended up serving fourteen years before he was permitted to take Rachel as his wife. Could we be that patient in our love? Learning by patience to control our passions and emotions will enhance our marital love.

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith works patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:2-4 NASB

Let us isolate the temptation for this time to sexual temptations. As we are aroused in our emotions towards the person whom we desire to give our love, we can take one of two routes. We can progressively act upon the desires moving closer and closer to a violation of innocence, or we can stand guard of our emotions, not allowing them to rule over our being. Control does not mean we deny our feelings. It means that while we accept the passionate moving in our physical being, we recognize warning signs and avoid the possible pitfalls. If we continually play with such fires, we will surely get burned. But the flames of such fire, when reserved for the proper context of covenant

love, will produce the warmth and comfort of intimate marital bonding. The maturing of our emotions through the practice of self-control will actually deepen our feelings, and perfect our sensual awareness for our marriage partner.

Patience sometimes requires that we ***"be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10 NASB)***. For example, Jacob's love was ordained of God and therefore withstood the years of waiting. We will do well to also wait on God's timing for the first invitation to intimacy and marriage; or worse yet, pursue an unwilling partner. From either viewpoint one of the two is not completely committed to the relationship. Insecurity or impatience may fuel the fires of the romance even though the sparks were set off from only one side. At the first sign of stormy weather, however, lonely embers will wane cold.

We should look at the biblical pattern for courtship and marriage. The man desires to pursue a woman to whom he is attracted. She does well to wait upon his invitation. If the desire is well founded, she can rest patiently trusting in the Lord to bring about the union. The patience she develops through self-control will produce strength of character that makes her even more appealing to her suitor.

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that...they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives. 1 Peter 3:1 NASB

Love is Kind

On a personal level, when we become close to another person, our emotions are often times laid bare. If we are unkind at such a point of vulnerability, we will cause walls to form in our relationship. We need to guard our reactions to one another. If we hurl cutting statements in heated moments we may wound the relationship and prevent our partner from opening their emotions to us again. Self-control is again the key to working toward kindness.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:19-23 NASB

Does Not Seek Its Own

...and He knelt down and began to pray, saying, 'Father...not My will, but Thine be done'. Luke 22:41-42 NASB

We need to look to Jesus for our primary example of unselfishness. Jesus not only died, but He lived His life for us. In marriage relationships we need to be willing to say, "Not my will" to our partner. Many times we treat our loved ones too much like we want to be treated. Our quiet mate may not want to be badgered for every detail of a tiresome day. An expressive mate, on the other hand, may yearn for a deeper level of communication than an occasional grunt. We need to look outside of our own needs in order to be sensitive to the heart of our partner. As we work at an

appreciative understanding of the needs and desires outside ourselves, God will join our love in a unified, compatible balance. By putting God's leadership above our own wants, we can develop an automatic reliance on His guidance in approaching our partner in accordance with their present emotional and also physical needs.

We may have observed other cultures where arranged marriages are the norm. Surprisingly to us, the divorce rate is much lower in these countries. When asked, the response from them yields the answer, "We learn to love one another." In our society we seem to have forgotten the need to "learn to love" on a deeper level than surface infatuation. We could profit from their example of unfailing commitment and patient expectation, which will lead to deep admiration.

In venturing into the deeper confines of our spouse's emotional world we also need to exercise caution so as not to violate their individualism. God created each of us unique, not only physically, but also in our emotional makeup. He will help us never to trample upon the special inner qualities of our mate as we join with His Spirit in viewing the third point of our triangle with respect.

There are also the deepest of man's emotions that we need to acknowledge. We personally should work to develop an emotional experience through our Spirit with the Spirit of God. The Bible explains this interaction.

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. 1 Corinthians 2:11-13 NASB

Sometimes we suffer frustration in which no one seems to understand how we feel or what problem we are facing. There are some such problems even our spouse can not join into with us. During these periods we need not despair. God Himself will comfort us as we take His lighter yoke upon our shoulders.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humbly in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. Matthew 11:29 NASB

Physical Intimacy

The Bride Adorned

And I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. Revelation 21:2 NASB

One of the primary purposes of the marriage union is to give us a foretaste of the plan of God for the wedding of Christ and the church. As we experience the proper anticipation, preparation, and fulfillment of the complete marital experience, we will come to look with even greater expectation of the joy of our life to come. Even as the church is to be presented **"without spot or wrinkle" (Ephesians 6:27)**, we should prepare ourselves to meet with our earthly love. A most warming example in scripture is that of Ruth, the Moabite, who pledged her support to her

bereaved mother-in-law, ***"where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God"***. Ruth first prepared her spirit as she surrendered her home, family, friends, and even her gods to take on this new step of faith into her promised land. Upon their arrival in Bethlehem, she continued her habit of preparation. She even worked in the fields of self-sacrifice, by sharing with Naomi the meal she was offered by a man named Boaz (see Ruth 3:3 NASB).

Ruth first caught the attention of Boaz by her reputation of kindness to Naomi (see Ruth 2:11-12). But he was even more taken by her as she came in obedience to the customs of the day (Ruth 4:10), cleansed and anointed in his behalf. But she was forced to wait upon the workings of the Lord as Boaz went to the nearer relative. However, patience, kindness, and self-sacrifice were indeed rewarded as Ruth 4:13 concluded, ***"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son"***. This son was none other than the grandfather of David, from whose house and lineage came forth Jesus, the Christ.

Our adornment must be carefully weighted.

"and let not your adornment be merely external braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, and putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" 1 Peter 3:3-4 NASB

We must remember that the proper adornment will send signals to those who would work outside of our good. ***"Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised"*** (Proverbs 31:30 NASB). The plan of God will also work for you as you prepare yourself to fill your position in a future marriage relationship.

There is No Fear in Love

The angel's words to Mary, ***"Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God"*** (Luke 1:26-38 NASB), should offer us insight as to God's outlook on marital intimacy. When told she would have a son, Mary was not ignorant to the process of life.

"How can this be, since I am a virgin? And the angel answered her and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1:34-35 NASB

We cannot know just how the union Mary experienced by the Holy Spirit took place, but we do know it produced the Savior of the world. We also see an example for us as we study righteous intimate relations. We see that there need be no fear for us if we have protected our innocence by following biblical rules in dating. Mary had no need to fear, because as she proclaimed, she had protected her virginity. The message we receive from the world, "practice prior to marriage," does not produce confidence. Premarital sexual experiences only inhibit freedom of expression by reminders of unpleasant past experiences and comparisons of former partners. For two partners, who on their wedding night experience together for the first time the miracle of godly intimacy, the wonder draws them ever so close to know they are both sharing themselves with the other for the first time. They are able to explore the mysteries of pure love together.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the Most High will overshadow you" can show us how a man's physical power over a woman need not be threatening or evil, but can be a wonderful experience. When a man's strength is teamed with kindness and righteousness there is a drawing to him of the woman he loves. She will respond even as Mary, ***"be it done to me according to your word"*** (Luke 1:38 NASB).

As our love for our spouses is fed with compassion, gentleness, and understanding, there will be rich fruit to gather. The Song of Solomon 2:10-14 shows us a beautiful invitation from the bridegroom to his bride:

My beloved responded and said to me, Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along. For behold the winter is past, the rain is over and gone the flowers have already appeared in the land; the time has arrived for pruning vines, and the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land. The fig tree has ripened its figs, and the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance. Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along! O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the steep pathway, let me see your form, let me hear your voice; For your voice is sweet and your form is lovely. Song of Solomon 2:10-14 NASB

Conclusion

We need to come to appreciate how the Lord desires us to enjoy His plan for man and woman. After all, it was the Lord who designed the whole glorious process! The devil would try to convince us that the Lord frowns upon any who take delight in sexual enjoyment. But to the contrary, it is the Lord who has spelled out to us through His word the pathway to the full enjoyment of His gifts, including the sexual relationship between a husband and wife. If we do not take heed to God's rules of order; however, we will come into the den of the devil's distortions. The working of these perversions is frightening and unseemly. It is the true concept, however, of a total love relationship that holds beauty and excitement for those who enter into a committed marriage.

Review Questions

- 1) What are the three areas of intimacy? Describe each.

- 2) Why is it unwise to seek to fulfill desires for marital intimacy solely through the spouse rather than God?

- 3) Can you complete one of the following exercises?
 - a. Draw a *God* triangle and a *Mankind* triangle.
 - b. Write a sample covenant between you and your future husband/wife.

- 4) What role do love and patience have in marital intimacy?

- 5) What does it mean to be a "*bride adorned for her husband*"?

CHAPTER 10

BUILDING BRICKS FOR HUSBANDS AND WIVES

By Michael D. Gross

Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 5:33

You have probably heard other young people say that there is no way that they are going to get married. When you observe all the pain and suffering of broken marriages, you can't blame someone for feeling that way. The divorce rate itself doubled from 1960 to 1980 to over 50 out of 100 marriages and it's not much better in the 21st century. The conclusion, however, is not that marriage doesn't work, but that couples are not following the blueprint. In addition, the popular philosophies of "I'm okay, you're okay, and feelings are neither right nor wrong; they're just there" have been taught along with other postmodern philosophies of life at marriage seminars and enrichment weekends for decades. All this has catapulted into a world of premarital sex and cohabitation resulting in thousands upon thousands of unwanted pregnancies and abortions. These philosophies have their own definitions of love and marriage. They are reminders of the definition of love portrayed in an Academy Award winning movie, which concluded that "love means never having to say you're sorry."

These philosophies produce a resistance to change. But what ever happened to the potter and the clay? In this chapter you will see how the marriage house is built from the frame to the actual bricks. It will be evident that this building personally involves you in becoming the kind of person God wants you to be. This will undoubtedly involve change. What Dr. Charles Swindoll says is very helpful here:

"A marriage can be rebuilt by "wisdom". It can be set in order by "understanding". It can actually be filled with indestructible things that no calamity can remove and no thief can steal. That takes "knowledge". I want to keep reminding you of those three ingredients lest you think that rebuilding your house into a home is simply a brick and mortar proposition. A sensitive, insightful spirit, a responsive, positive attitude, a teachable, willing heart are bottom-line essentials for a marriage".³

With this in mind, let us turn to the frame of God's original blueprint for marriage.

The Basic Role of Husband and Wife

Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 5:33

³ Swindoll, *Strike the Original Match*, p. 40.

The frame of a house is very important. A weak frame will have difficulty withstanding a storm. God, however, as the architect of marriage, has provided a strong frame. There has been a lot of misunderstanding and even misrepresentation of the basic role of the husband and the wife (the frame) in God's blueprint for marriage. Nevertheless, it is God's blueprint and, as such, is the substance of what marriage is intended to be.

The basic role of the wife is respectful submission.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Ephesians 5:22-23

Submission has become a very potent and even hated word in our modern society. Women's liberation movements by and large have rejected its use as well as the entire biblical understanding of the basic role of the wife. On the other hand, some misguided Christians have advocated a strictly dictatorial understanding of submission that places women in bondage and enslaved to their husbands without any participation in decision making. As a result, submission has become a threatening prospect to many wives and women in general. God never intended for a wife to respect and obey an abusive or even an unwise husband. However, if you understand the true meaning of what God is talking about, the wife will experience her role as a blessing. The Bible says ***"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord."*** Of course, submit does mean to subject yourself and to obey, but it means more than that. It means coming under a special covering that has been precisely provided for you by God. This covering involves protection, authority, and responsibility; protection in the sense that you are worthy to die for (Ephesians 5:25); authority in the sense that there is a divine order of positioning (Ephesians 5:23); and responsibility in the sense that God especially created a woman for a man.

For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. 1 Corinthians 11:8-9

The wife, therefore, is called to live for her husband with respect (reverence) for his God-given position. This is not an inferior role. It is misunderstood, however, when the husband is less than sincere in fulfilling his own role. No wife is called to subject herself or respect a husband who is emotionally or physically abusive to her or her children. Only a Godly husband is worthy of a wife's respect and reverent submission in God's blueprint for marriage.

The basic role of the husband (the frame) is unlimited love. The Bible says, ***"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it..." (Ephesians 5:25)***. God's love is unlimited and that's the kind of love the husband is to have for his wife. In fact, he is to love her as his own body (5:28). He is to care and nourish her as his own flesh (5:29). He is also to cherish and comfort her with the purpose of presenting her holy at his side before God (5:26, 27). The husband has been given the authority to bring his wife under this special covering. You can see now why the husband is called to die for her with unlimited love.

The basic role of the husband and the wife (the frame) has been designed by God Himself to be mutually compatible. Although there are normal growing pains associated with change, the basic role for each is worth pursuing with all your heart. With this pursuit in mind, let's examine

some of the actual building bricks for the wife and the husband. Dr. Swindoll again helps us by identifying at least three for each partner.⁴

Building Bricks for the Wife

Behavior

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 1 Peter 3:1- 2 NIV

The behavior of the wife here is not talking about manipulating the husband nor is it referring to conduct prior to becoming a Christian. Rather, it refers to her overall way of life in relation to being set apart and dedicated to God. Although you will notice this building brick is especially for wives with the wrong kind of husband, and you need to be cautioned against marrying unbelievers in the first place, the behavior of the wife is of great profit to the husband. Of course there is the winning of the unbelieving husband, but for the godly husband to see his wife's conduct as pure before God brings the gain of much joy and admiration. What she says and does, therefore, has quite an impact upon the marriage.

Appearance and Attitude

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 1 Peter 3:3-4 NIV

Some wrongly use this building brick to say women are not to wear make-up or jewelry at all. This is not what the Bible is saying. Instead, God is pointing to a very important factor for wives: An emphasis on the outside without concern for what's inside does little for a wife's total appearance and feelings for her husband. You should not trade what God wants to give you inside for the most expensive outward apparel. What's in your heart is imperishable and very costly in God's view, as well as the husband's view. Women may envy and men may be drawn to those who are outwardly attractive in looks and dress, but she who is inwardly clothed with strength of character and confidence is clothed with strength and honor and **"she shall rejoice in time to come" (Proverbs 31:25).**

Response

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. 1 Peter 3:5-6 NIV

⁴ Ibid., pp. 44-53

The way a wife responds to her husband's covering has a powerful effect on the status of the marriage. A helpful and encouraging response will produce continual growth in the relationship. Although God's blueprint emphasizes the wife's obedience, nowhere does he expect her to be a robot. Rather, she is to listen and pay attention to what her husband (covering) has to say and then do what is right to fulfill the Christian moral law.

You may have observed a wife who appears to be afraid, or intimidated, or even terrified of her husband. This represents an improper understanding of the marriage relationship and can lead to some rather unhealthy responses from both partners. Frequent arguments are typical when this building brick is missing or distorted in some way. Sarah, however, is an excellent example of this building brick. Of course she made an improper response when she laughed at the angels' message to Abraham (see Genesis 18:9-15). This certainly was a far cry from respectful submission. Even so, she must have learned much from this experience for later she was instrumental in fulfilling God's plan (see Genesis 21:1-12). Her response to what God had done was excellent (21:6-7), as well as her request to her husband (21:9-10). In fact, God instructed Abraham, **"...in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Issac shall thy seed be called" (21:12 KJV).**

You can see the dynamics of a mutual respect for the husband's position (covering). This, in return, provides a proper inroad for the wife's rightful and full participation in the direction of the marriage and in making important decisions in life. Of course, all this assumes that the husband is pursuing some building bricks of his own.

Building Bricks for the Husband

Live With Your Wife

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:7

Some husbands feel living with their wives is merely a matter of being the provider (breadwinner) and occupying the same bed. This is a far cry from God's blueprint for marriage. It is true that God does give the husband the responsibility to provide for the basic necessities of the home.

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8

It is important for the husband to take care of his wife. This means he must think beforehand how he is going to provide for her so he can meet the physical needs of food, water and shelter. You will notice that fur coats, diamonds and Cadillac's are not included as necessities. A good provider will not lower himself to winning his wife's respect with such outward and excessive luxuries.

A husband needs to be more than just a provider. Living with your wife also means managing the house including conversing/talking with your wife (communication).

He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 1 Timothy 3:4-5 NIV

This does not imply, however, that the husband is to be a "little Napoleon" in intimidating his wife by barking orders at his every whim. It is rather the leadership that makes a wife desire to be under his godly covering. His leadership and management must be with an attitude of teamwork ***“as being heirs together of the grace of life...” (1 Pet. 3:7)***. The godly husband fully understands and accepts that his wife is a joint participant in all things pertaining to the marriage and life. Dr. Jay E. Adams provides one of the best summaries of what this is all about:

A good manager knows how to put other people to work...He will be careful not to neglect or destroy his wife's abilities. Rather, he will use them to the fullest...He does not consider someone to be dragged along. Rather, he thinks of her as useful, helpful and a wonderful blessing from God...A manager has an eye focused on all that is happening, but does not do everything himself. Instead, he looks at the whole picture and keeps everything under control. He knows everything that is going on, how it is operating, and only when it is necessary to do so steps in to change and to modify or in some way to help.⁵

This building brick calls the husband to be a good manager of the home and an effective communicator to his wife.

Know Your Wife

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding... 1 Peter 3:7

It is no secret that many husbands do not know how to treat a wife. This is mostly due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. This building brick is not referring to knowledge about the anatomy or biological functioning of a woman, though many men could benefit from that. Although this is helpful and necessary, the husband is called to a higher calling to know and understand his wife according to Christian knowledge.

Husbands have a tendency to limit his knowing of his wife to a strictly physical or sexual sense. Marriage is the only context God has ordained for you to fulfill your sexual needs.

Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 NIV

Of course, God's blueprint for marriage provides for a mutually fulfilling sex life and the Bible says both husbands and wives are responsible for the sexual relationship. God's word directs husbands and wives to continue sexual relations and only discontinue by mutual consent (harmonious agreement).

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each

⁵ Jay E. Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), pp. 91-92.

other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.
1 Corinthians 7:3-5 NIV

Notice how each yields their body to their partner and how neither is to deprive the other of healthy sexual fulfillment. In fact, to do so is to open the door to the temptation of Satan. Sex should never be used as an emotional or manipulative weapon against a spouse. Although the sexual relationship is a very important part of knowing your wife, it is only a part of the total picture. There is a progression of events in the book of Genesis that illustrates this point:

Genesis 4:1	<i>Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived...</i>
Genesis 4:17	<i>Cain knew his wife and she conceived...</i>
Genesis 4:25	<i>Adam knew his wife again and she bare a son...</i>
Genesis 38:8-10	<i>Onan...went into his wife...</i>

Each of these references is in the context of the sexual relationship in marriage. It is important, however, for you to see a fundamental difference between knowing your wife and viewing the importance exclusively in sexual or physical terms. Adam knew his wife. He knew her spiritually and emotionally as well as physically. He called her Eve, the mother of all living. Adam knew her strengths and weaknesses. He knew her as a true companion and "help meet." Their physical union, therefore, was a blending of their spiritual and emotional lives and they rejoiced in the birth of their children. On the other hand, Onan just hopped into bed with his wife out of pleasure and duty. In addition, he despised the possibility of having children with her so he took his pleasure and then ejaculated on the ground. The Bible says that ***"the thing which he did displeased the Lord, therefore He killed him..." (Genesis 38:10).***

There is a need in people to be truly known and understood. If you are the husband, you should know your wife better than anyone else. Next to God, she should be your best friend and the vessel of your earthly blessing.

Honor Your Wife

Husbands, likewise... giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7

This building brick makes it absolutely necessary for the husband to assign his wife the appropriate respect that correlates to her created value by God. Although he is not to worship, pamper, or smother her, he is to present her as precious and of great value, like Adam presented his wife.

And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." Genesis 2:23

If you are a husband, you should promise never to belittle your wife in any way publicly or privately.

For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. Ephesians 5:29

This is because you are inheriting together the grace of life. A husband should never forget this truth, nor should he forget that this is the only building brick that comes with the warning: ***“that your prayers may not be hindered.”*** If you do not present your wife with Christian honor, value, and respect, your prayers will be delayed and even thwarted. For this reason, husbands may want to start with this building brick.

Conclusion

You have probably noticed that the husband's building bricks are directed toward the wife and involve a total giving of himself. The wife's building bricks are directed more toward her function as one who comes alongside to help and involve a respect of her husband. God's blueprint for marriage is designed for a mutual compatibility that results in a unique blending of two human lives (male and female) into one. Solomon's wife, Shulamith, rightly summed it up in one phrase:

He brought me to his banqueting table and his banner over me was love. Song of Solomon 2:4 KJV

You have also probably noticed in this chapter and other chapters in this study a stark contrast between God's view on moral issues and marriage with the popular postmodern world's view. Comparing God's view with the world's view is a good thing as long as both views are fully and accurately presented. The traditional view of marriage is being challenged like never before. Generations are preparing to chuck the whole notion of marriage altogether in favor of cohabitation. Homosexuals are spreading their doctrines from state to state and around the world. Women are now aborting babies in the late terms of pregnancy. The decline of Christian values is well documented. What will God's response be? Will there be a righteous remnant that will follow His standards for morality and marriage? If you want to be a part of His remnant, then you will need to understand and apply this immovable foundational truth from God's word:

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." 2 Timothy 2:19

Only God's standards for morality and marriage will give you the solid foundation needed to experience an abundantly fulfilling life and marriage. The Architect of Marriage has designed this for you! Follow and obey the Lord.

Review Questions

- 1) What popular philosophies produce a resistance to change?
- 2) What is the basic role of husband and wife? Explain each.
- 3) What are three building bricks for a wife and what do they mean?
- 4) What are three building bricks for a husband and what do they mean?
- 5) Explain why the marriage relationship is the best context for sexual fulfillment.
- 6) Draw a picture of a house depicting God's blueprint for marriage.

Appendix I

MORAL ATTITUDE SCALES

Moral Attitude Scale (Student)

Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Circle Choice

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|----|---|
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Moral Education is sex education. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | There is a right and wrong way of living. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Rock/movie stars are good moral examples. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Professional athletes are good moral examples. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Teachers are good moral examples. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Ministers are good moral examples. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | What someone does with their own body is their own business. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | It's okay to steal if it is done to save someone's life. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Young people should be taught about gay rights and the gay lifestyle. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Cohabitation is a good way to prepare for marriage. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Marriage is the best context for sexual fulfillment. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Same sex marriage is an appropriate lifestyle. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | It's the responsibility of parents to teach sex education. |
| SA | A | U | D | SD | Young people need a moral training course. |

Gender: M F

Age_____

Moral Attitude Scale (Parent)

Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Circle Choice

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| SA A U D SD | A decline in moral standards is the biggest problem facing communities. |
| SA A U D SD | Local schools should include moral training in their curriculum. |
| SA A U D SD | Local schools should include alternative lifestyles in their curriculum. |
| SA A U D SD | Same sex marriage is an appropriate lifestyle. |
| SA A U D SD | Moral training should be taught by certified educators. |
| SA A U D SD | It's the responsibility of parents to teach sex education. |
| SA A U D SD | There exists a set of rules or values that have a universal application. |
| SA A U D SD | Moral education is sex education. |
| SA A U D SD | The best way to morally educate our children is to make sure they know the "facts of life." |
| SA A U D SD | Independence is the most important trait to instill in children. |
| SA A U D SD | Strict obedience is the most important trait to instill in children. |
| SA A U D SD | Tolerance is the most important trait to instill in children. |
| SA A U D SD | Cohabitation is a good way to prepare for marriage. |
| SA A U D SD | The Bible is the best source for moral education. |
| SA A U D SD | The decisions a person makes reflects his/her moral standards. |
| SA A U D SD | It's okay to steal if it is done to save someone's life. |
| SA A U D SD | Young people need a moral training course. |

Gender: M F

Age_____

Marital Status: S D M

Moral Attitude Scale (Teacher)

Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Circle Choice

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| SA A U D SD | A decline in moral standards is the biggest problem facing communities. |
| SA A U D SD | Local schools should include moral training in their curriculum. |
| SA A U D SD | Local schools should include alternative lifestyles in their curriculum. |
| SA A U D SD | Moral training should be taught by certified educators. |
| SA A U D SD | It's the responsibility of parents to teach sex education. |
| SA A U D SD | There exists a set of rules or values that have a universal application. |
| SA A U D SD | Moral education is sex education. |
| SA A U D SD | Most educators are confident in teaching sex education in the classroom. |
| SA A U D SD | Independence is the most important trait to instill in children. |
| SA A U D SD | Strict obedience is the most important trait to instill in children. |
| SA A U D SD | Tolerance is the most important trait to instill in children. |
| SA A U D SD | The Bible is the best source for moral education. |
| SA A U D SD | Cohabitation is a good way to prepare for marriage. |
| SA A U D SD | Same sex marriage is an appropriate lifestyle. |
| SA A U D SD | The decisions a person makes reflects his/her moral standards. |
| SA A U D SD | It's okay to steal if it is done to save someone's life. |
| SA A U D SD | Young people need a moral training course. |

Gender: M F

Marital Status: S D M

Years of Certified Teaching Experience: _____

Appendix II

Moral Training Exam

1. Sexually explicit material in books, magazines, movies, websites, and music is called _____.
2. The danger of sexually explicit material is that it...
 - a. involves an unnatural desire
 - b. involves moral desensitization
 - c. can become an addiction
 - d. All of the above
3. It's our responsibility to control our bodies by...
 - a. exercising and dieting
 - b. presenting our bodies and minds to God
 - c. fasting
 - d. getting regular check-ups
4. The only proper context for sexual relations is...
 - a. love
 - b. dating
 - c. marriage
 - d. the bedroom
5. Drug and alcohol abuse is primarily a ...
 - a. sin problem
 - b. disease
 - c. habit
 - d. all of the above
6. Substances that diminish mental and physical control are called _____.
7. We should say no to drug and alcohol use because...
 - a. it impairs human judgment
 - b. it encourages others to follow
 - c. the Bible warns against it
 - d. all of the above
8. The Bible speaks of drug and alcohol abuse in the context of...
 - a. falling away from God
 - b. communion
 - c. fellowship
 - d. parties
9. Disobeying the "moral policeman" within each of us means...
 - a. to violate the mind
 - b. to violate the body
 - c. to violate the heart
 - d. to violate the church

10. What primarily determines the kind of person you are going to be?
 - a. wealth
 - b. decisions
 - c. ability
 - d. opportunities
11. Godliness is a lifestyle and involves a specific attitude.
 - a. True
 - b. False
12. What is on the inside determines your...
 - a. occupation
 - b. success and wealth
 - c. actions and lifestyle
 - d. religious denomination
13. The best way to handle peer pressure is to...
 - a. stay home
 - b. play sports
 - c. date only believers
 - d. put God first
14. Godliness is best produced by...
 - a. friends
 - b. knowing God's word and doing it
 - c. parents
 - d. teachers
15. Values and priorities are best determined by _____.
16. It's alright to dress however you want to unless you are...
 - a. trying to make new friends
 - b. making a claim on godliness
 - c. going to church
 - d. going out to eat
17. God created us with three parts: body, soul (mind), spirit (heart).
 - a. True
 - b. False
18. The main way to lose your innocence is by...
 - a. overeating
 - b. moral excellence
 - c. a sexual encounter
 - d. self-control
19. The keys to restoring innocence are...
 - a. confession, forgiveness, and love
 - b. counseling and time
 - c. changing schools and making new friends
 - d. getting married

20. It doesn't matter if a Christian dates an unbeliever.
- True
 - False
21. The Bible warns us against partnership with those who do not uphold standards for...
- safe sex
 - love
 - righteousness and purity
 - friendship
22. Secular means...
- free from danger or the chance of loss
 - not distinctly religious or Christian in nature
 - having a soothing or calming effect
 - divided into many sections
23. A "help meet" refers to...
- one who corresponds to the man
 - one who is before the face of man
 - one who is alongside the man
 - all of the above
24. To be uninhibited in a marriage is an example of...
- severance
 - permanence
 - unity
 - intimacy
25. To say that wars are not won by evacuations is an example of the importance in marriage of...
- severance
 - permanence
 - unity
 - intimacy
26. To leave one's father and mother in marriage is an example of...
- severance
 - permanence
 - unity
 - intimacy
27. The willing to blend our lives to complete the other in marriage is an example of...
- severance
 - permanence
 - unity
 - intimacy
28. According to the original blueprint, Jesus says absolutely "no" to divorce for any reason.
- True
 - False

29. The Bible says God _____ divorce.
30. Which of the following is not a biblical reason for divorce and/or remarriage?
- a. when a husband or wife is guilty of sexual immorality and refuses to repent and live faithfully with his/her mate
 - b. when the husband or wife is an unbeliever who willfully leaves the believer
 - c. when the husband or wife does not love his spouse anymore
 - d. when a divorce/remarriage occurs prior to becoming a Christian
31. Commitment means to...
- a. give in trust, bind, or obligate oneself
 - b. be honest and truthful
 - c. repeat vows
 - d. wear a wedding ring
32. The Bible says we are to love Jesus Christ more than our husbands and wives.
- a. True
 - b. False
33. The love relationship between a husband and wife is to be like the relationship between Christ and the _____.
34. Sexual relations in marriage are primarily an expression of romance between a husband and wife.
- a. True
 - b. False
35. The basic role of a husband is...
- a. unlimited love
 - b. respectful submission
 - c. provider of an inheritance
 - d. a manager
36. The basic role of the wife is...
- a. unlimited love
 - b. respectful submission
 - c. providing a second income
 - d. bearing children
37. The goal of God's blueprint for marriage is...
- a. prosperity
 - b. happiness
 - c. success and fame
 - d. a unique blending of two lives into one
38. The Bible calls homosexuality...
- a. a sin
 - b. an unnatural desire
 - c. ungodly
 - d. all the above

39. Statistics show that cohabitation or living together before marriage...
- a. decreases the risk of divorce
 - b. increases the risk of divorce
 - c. increases productivity at the office
 - d. decreases the number of court cases
40. What rights do homosexuals have in Christ?
- a. The right to marry their same sex partner
 - b. The right to adopt children with their same sex partner
 - c. The right to continue in the homosexual lifestyle
 - d. The right to confess and repent of their sin

Appendix III
DECISION MAKING MODEL

- 1) Identify the problem.

- 2) Define the problem.

- 3) Explore and explain ways of solving the problem.

- 4) Act. Describe precisely what you would do.

- 5) Look at the effects and risks of your decision/action. List them.

Appendix IV

Using the Decision-Making Model

It is inaccurate to claim that the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables of Jesus are dealing with the abstract. Nothing could be further from the truth. As the 20th century ethicist, Joseph Fletcher put it in his book, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality*, "an ethic is unauthentic until it gets down to cases." Jesus dealt with practical cases that called for decision-making. For instance, Jesus said, "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two." (Matt. 5:41). At the time a Roman soldier could conscript a civilian to carry his gear for one mile. It was a real situation requiring a decision, but how do you in your world today arrive at a decision consistent with the teachings of Jesus? To answer this question, we will look at a parable of Jesus and use the Decision-Making Model in Appendix III to come to terms with a world famous case study called the *Heinz Dilemma*.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) is a good example of how Jesus called His followers to make decisions.

So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ *And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."* ²⁹ *But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"* ³⁰ *Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."* ³¹ *"Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side."* ³² *"Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side."* ³³ *"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion."* ³⁴ *"So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him."* ³⁵ *"On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'"* ³⁶ *"So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"* ³⁷ *And he said, "He who showed mercy on him."* Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." Luke 10:27-37

We can construct from parables like this one a decision-making model consistent with His teachings. The model looks like this:

1. Identify the problem
2. Define it
3. Explore strategies for solving it
4. Act
5. Look at the effects

You can almost hear the lawyer's thoughts as Jesus walked him through the parable:

10:30	Oh, this man needs help.
10:31-32	Doesn't anyone want to help him?
	He could die!

10:33	I believe I can help by bandaging his wounds and getting him to the nearest place of safety.
10:35	I took him to the nearest lodge and paid for it.
10:36	I helped him and he lived.

The lawyer had to conclude on the side of showing mercy (10:37). Notice beforehand he wanted to justify himself (10:29), but now he knew the answer for himself to the moral principle of *love your neighbor as yourself* (10:27, 37). This model represents a very important concept in moral decision-making; love transcends all.

Now, let's see if this decision-making model fits with the famous *Heinz Dilemma* that still finds its way into textbooks today.

In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could get together only about \$1,000, which was half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." Heinz got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

Like the lifeboat dilemma, moral relativists continue to use the *Heinz Dilemma* to extend their brand of values clarification into the postmodern age. However, notice the story does have some parallels with the Parable of the Good Samaritan and raises some questions as well.

1. A person needs help and may die without it
2. No one seems to want to help
3. Heinz can steal or find a Good Samaritan
4. Heinz steals the drug
5. No effects are indicated though some may be assumed

Several questions arise in evaluating the situation in regards to the decision-making model. Where's the Good Samaritan representing the values of true Christianity? And why are there no effects to Heinz' action? Not one concrete consequence is provided in the *Heinz Dilemma*. This is the way postmodern thinkers like it so you are forced to adopt their relativism as the basis for all your moral decision-making. They want you to conclude in the Heinz Dilemma with 75% of American adults who say it is wrong to steal, but most might do it given the situation. Actually, the Heinz Dilemma is not as difficult a case as you may be led to believe. Although it begs for the compassion of the Good Samaritan and divine justice for the doctor, it proves there is a place for a code of morality written upon the hearts of Christians in the 21st century.

Appendix V

Sample Case Response to the Heinz Dilemma

1. **Identify the problem.** Heinz must get help or his wife will die. This is the most obvious problem in the case. This fact alone compels him to approach the problem with desperation. Other problems, therefore, arise, such as the limitation of time to get help and to consider the best course of action. It is a life threatening situation!
2. **Define the problem.** The fundamental problem of getting help fast is compounded when no one seems to want to help. The problem can be defined as trying to get help in a desperate situation (life threatening) when no one seems to want to help. The druggist has selfish motives and the people Heinz knew did not give enough money. This is assuming Heinz made his need known.
3. **Explore and explain ways of solving the problem.** The problem lends itself to a desperate solution. If Heinz does not get the drug or the money for the drug, he will steal it. In fact, this is what he did. I believe there were other ways of solving the problem. Heinz could have called upon the church and/or community to put immediate pressure upon the druggist. If he still refused to cooperate, they could have sought an immediate court order forcing him to release the drug. Stealing did not have to be an option in violation of civil and moral law.
4. **Act. Describe precisely what you would do.** I would have first gone to the members of my church for prayer (James 5:14) and help (Matt. 18:15-18). I would ask them to immediately talk with the druggist and challenge his position. If he still refused, I would get an immediate court order forcing him to release the drug. In fact, I would start this process when the druggist first refused because it is a life threatening situation.
5. **Look at the effects and risks of your decision/action.** List them.
 1. My wife could die before I can get a court order or help from my church.
 2. If she dies I will probably feel angry and bitter at the druggist and my church for not helping. I also may feel guilty for not stealing the drug.
 3. Mt wife could die also with or without the drug.
 4. The druggist may sue for damages to his reputation and patent.
 5. I may want to find another church and/or community.

Appendix VI

CASE STUDIES

Case studies are brief stories representing segments of real life which are designed for discussion, role play, and moral decision-making. The case studies that follow contain a number of issues relating to the moral principles within the chapters of the text. Each provides an opportunity to practically apply what you have learned, to interact with other students, and to demonstrate your ability to make moral decisions consistent with the Bible.

Case Study	Scripture References	Best Chapters to Use
1	Matthew 22:1-4	1, 2, 3, 7
2	Luke 15:11-32	3, 4, 6, 9-12
3	Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7	1-4
4	Proverbs 3:1-12; John 9:39; Genesis 4:2-14	3, 4, 5-8
5	Matthew 13:3-23; Mark 4:2-20 Luke 8:4-15	3, 5-8
6	Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:22; Ephesians 4:25	4, 7, 9-12
7	Luke 10:30-36	1-4
8	Proverbs 1, 6, 7	5, 7, 8, 9-12

You can write your responses on the back of the appropriate case study using the Decision-Making Model of Appendix III. Although these case studies were compiled in 1989-1990, you can still use them to improve your decision making skills. Feel free to write up your own case studies and/or use the Decision-Making Model on moral decisions you are currently facing.

Case Study 1

Prepared by Michael D. Gross based on the Parable of the Wedding Feast

Cathy Jones was elected President of the Christian Fellowship Club at her school. She had been active in her church's junior high youth group for three years and was excited about the opportunity of serving as President of CFC. After all, CFC was the largest group in the school with now over fifty members.

It was great to have so many Christian friends that you could really count on. Everyone was so close, that is, until Jerry Evans and Lisa Core got involved.

Jerry Evans was the quarterback of the football team. He was a Christian and attended a church on the west side of town. He joined CFC two months after I became President. At first, I thought it was the best thing that could happen. But then I noticed that he seemed to dominate our meetings with a lot of new ideas such as build your own banana split parties and the like. He even suggested an unchaperoned overnight campout. Before I knew it, the group became so interested in these "fun" things that when it came time for regular Bible study, they acted very bored. As if this was not enough, Lisa Core joined CFC shortly after Jerry.

Lisa was probably the most popular girl at Central Junior High. Her model-like figure and looks made her especially of interest to the boys. Jerry and Lisa hit it off from day one. I could see them at CFC meetings with their hands all over each other in the back. I even saw them on more than one occasion "making out" in the hallway before meetings. I also was shocked when I overheard Lisa tell Jerry to come over to her house and that her parents would not be home. The way they dressed bothered me too. Lisa often wore halter tops with tight shorts that were very sexually suggestive to say the least. Jerry wore cut-off tee shirts that left his stomach and much of his chest exposed. I sometimes wondered if I was just being judgmental or was something wrong with them being a part of CFC?

CFC chose one spokesperson as did other clubs at Central to share about their respective group at the school's annual spring banquet. I wasn't totally surprised when CFC selected Lisa, but I could hardly sleep at night thinking that it wasn't right for her to represent CFC to all the parents and students. They just didn't belong, but then maybe I was only jealous.

Jim Kinsley, CFC's Vice President, was even more upset than me. He wanted both Jerry and Lisa kicked out of CFC. He said they were not even active in their church's youth group and should not be allowed to continue being members, let alone represent CFC. Although I agreed, I wondered if such action taken by the officers would divide the group and ruin CFC. Jim arranged a meeting of all CFC officers after school to make a decision on the matter. As I sat in class I thought to myself how great CFC had been over the years. The bell rang. Jim stuck his head in the door. Come on, Cathy. We don't want to be late for the meeting.

Case Study 2

Prepared by Michael D. Gross based on the Parable of the Prodigal Son

Jim Stevenson was the top athlete at Walnut Grove Middle School. There was little doubt in the minds of most that a bright future lay ahead. Everyone was surprised when Jim was not in school. As the first quarter neared its final week, they began to ask more and more direct and pointed questions. Why is Jim in the juvenile detention center? Most did not realize that Jim's father and mother divorced two years earlier and his father had remarried.

I knew everyone was staring at me the first day of my return at Walnut Grove. I could tell they had many questions too, but I wasn't about to talk. If they only knew what I had been through. How could I have been so stupid to withdraw all the money from the savings account my father had started for me. Just a year ago he gave me the privilege of controlling the account. I bet he thinks that was a mistake now.

Most of the Middle School knew I ran away from home, but I ended up in juvenile court because the guys I hung around with burglarized a home. Although I didn't have anything to do with it I knew afterwards about it so they sent me to the detention center for 8 weeks. Believe me, I was glad to be out and starting the 2nd quarter at Walnut Grove. Dad visited me regularly and said he didn't hold it against me that I had taken the money and ran. In fact, he took me out to my favorite restaurant to celebrate my release. My older brother, actually my step-brother said I should have been sent to prison. That hurt a lot. I wondered how many of my classmates felt that way also, but I had a bigger problem at the moment. It was Mrs. Arnold, my English teacher. She assigned the class to write a paper on "why I love my families". Although it was difficult, I wrote the paper and turned it in. I told her exactly how I felt. I loved my father and didn't like my step mother and brother. I explained in detail why I ran away with the money and how I ended up a juvenile delinquent. I actually felt some relief after I turned it in, that is, until she announced we would have to read them orally in class. Some of the class may begin to treat me like my brother did! Maybe I should just take a failing grade, but what would the class think? As these thoughts raced through my mind I heard Mrs. Arnold call my name. Jim, let's hear your report now.

Case Study 3

Case study prepared by Terry L. Pruski based on the Parable of the Lost Sheep

The notebook falls to the ground, papers scatter, and Mike begins to feel the hot rumble of fury rising from within. He closes his eyes, but not before he sees the "new kid" snickering as he slips out the front door.

"Boy, it's a good thing he's gone", he says to himself, "Because I'm not sure what I would've done to him if he had stayed. I can't understand how anyone can be so mean".

At lunch Mike sits with his friends comparing notes. Steve adds, "You think that's bad, the teacher gave me an 'F' on my quiz for cheating, and it's all because that new kid kept trying to get the answers from me. I'm telling you, I've had it."

"We've got to do something", Mike says, "I can't put up with him anymore. The thing is I can't figure him out. I've never done anything to him. I don't even sit near him except in History. It's not my fault the teacher makes me sit behind him", Steve says, "I don't care why he picks on us, all I know is that we better think of something."

Case Study 4

Case study prepared by Terry L. Pruski based on Proverbs 3:1-12, John 9:39, Genesis 4:2-14

"It isn't fair!" he blurted out with all the strength and conviction of knowing that he was being cheated out of his God given rights.

"How come I never get to hang out at the mall with my friends, or go to the theatre alone with my friends, or stay out at their place after dark? Not only that, you always let Freddy get away with murder!"

"Now, Greg, you know that's not true!" his mother argued.

"Not true," interrupts Greg, "then how come you didn't punish Freddy when he stayed out past his curfew, and the next week when I tried that I got grounded for an entire week?"

"It's so obvious, Greg, that you don't want to listen to reason, so I'm not going to discuss it. Now go upstairs until you cool down and we'll settle the matter when your father comes home!"

Ben stomps into his room and slams the door. "It's always the same, I always get sent to my room and Freddy gets to do whatever he wants! I always get punished and Freddy gets off scot-free! I know (he assures himself) it's because Freddy is much older, it's because he's so smart, and who cares about honor society anyway! Who cares if Mr. goody-two-shoes sings in the church choir? He's just a sissy."

The next day, Greg skips school and meets his buddies at the junkyard.

"They aren't fair, I tell ya. Just last month boy wonder took out the car and smashed up the back taillight as he backed out of the driveway, and all my parents did was to give him some line about how practice makes perfect and how not to feel bad because everyone makes mistakes. Then I go and ask my dad for a couple of bucks to fix the flat on my bike,...You know, the flat I got from driving over the hurdles at the track,...and my dad starts to lecture me about how I'll just have to earn the money myself! It's not fair, I tell ya, I have half a mind to run away and show them and Mr. Perfect that I'm not going to put up with their baloney."

"Hey man, I can't relate to that scene. My older brother is a junkie and my sister ran off with her boyfriend. I guess that makes me the good one at my house." They all begin to smirk, and elbow each other knowingly.

Case Study 5

Case study prepared by Scott V. Jemson based on the Parable of the Sower and the Four Soils

It all seemed innocent enough; having Christian friends was good, he knew, but he'd never have a chance of being any kind of leader among them, especially as a fairly new Christian. Another peer group in school wasn't too bad, but it wasn't Christian. Even so, the members of that group accepted Randy's "differentness" as "in." After all, everyone in adolescence develops differently anyhow, and maybe he could witness to some of these kids if he hung out with them long enough. The rationalizations went on and on. Soon, Randy's conscience became dulled. "Off-color" jokes were not as offensive. He began to fantasize about girls and winning the lottery someday. Soon, even serious offenses such as taking the Lord's name in vain passed by Randy's ears without so much as his batting an eye.

Eventually, he became involved with the worse bunch of kids in the school, who delighted in watching this Christian being pulled into their degraded lifestyle of drugs, alcohol, and loose living. Randy gained leadership and popularity, but he lost his joy. He was miserable.

The next morning in homeroom, his old friend Jamie Wilson told him he had something important to talk about, and maybe they could get together during lunch in the cafeteria. Jamie was, in fact, the one who shared the good news about Jesus dying for our sins with him six months earlier. He even prayed with Jamie at that time and accepted Jesus. He was miserable so what could he lose anyhow? "Sure Jamie, I'll see you at 12:15." In the cafeteria, Randy noticed Jamie approaching with what looked to be a Bible in hand. "Hi, Randy. Can I buy you a soda?" Jamie asked.

Case Study 6

Case study prepared by David Ice based on Proverbs 6:16-19; 12:22; Ephesians 4:25

"Mother, may I go out and ride my skateboard with Mike and Randy?" "You may if your homework is done." "It is" said Doug and away he went. Just as he got out the door he remembered that there was a big history test on Thursday. This is only Monday he thought. I have a few more days to get ready for history. So without another thought Doug joined his two friends and skated the night away.

The next morning when Doug came down for breakfast, he was finishing up his math homework. "I thought you told me your homework was finished last night." "It was, except for a few math problems." Immediately he thought about the history test he needed to study for.

After school, some of Doug's friends were talking about playing football after supper. Doug agreed to go. When supper was over he asked his mom if he could go play. "No last minute math problems?" she asked. "No!" he laughed.

Wednesday morning, Doug was late coming down to breakfast. "Hurry up Doug, you are going to be late. Why are you so slow today?" "I-uh-just must be sleepy" Doug yawned. It had taken Doug fifteen minutes to finish his algebra that morning.

That evening Doug got out his history notes to study for the test. He had just begun to look at his notes when his mother called to him, "Let's go Doug, it's time for church." Doug's heart sank into his stomach. He forgot that he had church that night. "I don't feel well," he said. "Oh come on Doug, you were fine at the supper table." "No, really mom! I don't feel well." Doug's mom realized something was wrong, "Tell me the truth, son. What's wrong?"

Case Study 7

Case study prepared by Jeffrey M. Mount based on the Parable of the Good Samaritan

One night, mid-October, a man left his office for the evening. It had just turned dark outside and as it was his custom, set forth for a leisurely walk to his home.

Being a man of intelligence, he chose not to carry much cash, and minimized his jewelry to a watch, and his wedding band, as to be an unattractive candidate for robbery.

As the man strolled home, seeing the time was getting late, he decided to break his normal route for a short-cut, a more direct route, even though it passed through an unlit, unfamiliar area.

The man, although uncomfortable of his path, proceeded with speed, ignoring his questions and fears. Then within an instant it happened. Five teenage boys jumped him, stole what he had, beat him, and ripped off his clothes in their attempt to find more treasure and left him for dead, semi-conscious.

Within a few moments, a business associate, who worked in the same office, drove past where the man lay. Not recognizing him, and in quite a hurry, didn't stop, but parked his Mercedes and went into his home.

Before an hour and a half had past, a young couple coming home from a Bible study at church, happened across this man, covered him with their coats, flagged down the police and stayed day by day with him until recovery took place.

A policeman was assigned to investigate the incident that by now had made its way into several local newspapers. As a result of numerous phone calls, the city mayor called and demanded a full explanation from the chief of police. The chief in return required a full report of any wrongdoing by 8:00 a.m. the next day. The policeman was tired, but had his report ready and typed as he knocked on the door. "Come in," said the Chief of Police, "let's see that report!"

Case Study 8

Case study prepared by Sandra R. Gleespen based on the book of Proverbs

Jack had eyed Cindy all summer, out working in the yard with her mother or walking the neighbor's baby. He had gotten very bold lately, offering to help her mow the lawn. She was so different from the girls he had known in the old neighborhood. He understood that mom and dad had scraped and sacrificed to buy this house in a nice quiet area. He knew they did it mostly out of concern for the boys they would see him meeting at the corner, and for the girls they knew he never quite felt comfortable bringing home to meet them. But they couldn't understand how lonely he had been this summer.

But tonight Cindy's mother had asked him over for pizza with their family. Could it be real!

After supper Mrs. Parks asked Jack to go to church with them the next morning. "You would enjoy meeting the fine young people in Cindy's Sunday School class."

Jack agreed to go. There was something very different about this family, something that made him want to know more.

While Mr. & Mrs. Parks were off putting Cindy's little brother to bed Jack and Cindy went out to the patio. A beautiful full moon was rising behind the stately pine trees in their back yard. Jack, as was his accepted custom, bent over to kiss Cindy. She stopped him abruptly.

Appendix VII

Answer Key

1. pornography
2. d
3. b
4. c
5. a
6. intoxicants
7. d
8. a
9. c
10. b
11. a
12. c
13. d
14. b
15. God
16. b
17. a
18. c
19. a
20. b
21. c
22. b
23. d
24. d
25. b
26. a
27. c
28. a
29. hates
30. c
31. a
32. a
33. church
34. b
35. a
36. b
37. d
38. d
39. b
40. d

Appendix VIII

Statistics

Marriage

- People are getting married later in life. The median age of those married for the first time is currently 28.3 for men and 25.8 for women (National Health Statistics Report, 2012). Compare this to the numbers from 1960, when the median age was 23 for men and 20 for women (The State of Our Unions 1999, 10).
- The marriage rate continues to decline in the United States. In fact, there has been a decline of over 50% from 1970 – 2010 in the annual number of marriages in every 1000 unmarried adult women. (The State of Our Unions 2011, 60)
- The percentage of married individuals, over the age of 18, who respond that their marriages are “very happy” has gradually declined over the last four decades, though the numbers have leveled out in the past 20 years. The most recent studies show that 63.1% of men and 60.7% of women classify their marriages as such. (The State of Our Unions 2011, 66)
- The rate of satisfaction in marriage is higher for husbands and wives when both regularly maintain religious attendance and feel that God is the center of their marriage. (The State of Our Unions 2011, 31, 33)
- “Compared with Whites, African Americans are more likely to have children outside of marriage, are less likely to marry at all, and if they do marry, are more likely to end their unions in divorce.” (Marital Quality in African American Marriages, 2011)
- Both men and women have higher life expectancies when married than those who are single or divorced. (Why Marriage Matters, 30)

Divorce

- The American divorce rate is nearly twice what it was in 1960, though it has declined somewhat since hitting an all-time high in 1980. This decline suggests a higher rate of marital stability, due to both a higher age of first marriage as well as the reservation of marriage for the economically stable. (The State of Our Unions 2011, 67,69)
- Current estimates suggest that 40-50% of recent marriages will end in separation, prior the death of either spouse. These figures can be dramatically decreased by a number of different factors. In other words, “if you are a reasonably well-educated person with a decent income, come from an intact family and are religious, and marry after the age of 25 without having a baby first, your chances of divorce are very low indeed.” (The State of Our Unions 2011, 69, 73)
- According to recent studies, the percentage of children that experience parental divorce by the age of 12 is estimated to be about 24%. (Why Marriage Matters, 44)
- Statistics show that, due to the lack of stability and support in the home, children from divorced parents experience significant decrease in academic success, physical health, and future stability in their own relationships. (Marriage and the Family in the United States: Resources for Society and Why Marriage Matters)

Cohabitation

- Couples who cohabit have a 46% greater risk of divorce than couples who do not live together before marriage (Marriage and the Family in the United States: Resources for Society, 10). Those who cohabit without a prior commitment to marriage are especially at risk if they eventually decide to marry. (see Dr. Scott Stanley, "Sliding vs. Deciding" blog)
- There has been a significant increase in the number of women presently cohabiting with a man: from 3% in 1982 to 11% in 2006-2010. (National Health Statistics Report, 2012)
- "Among women, 68% of unions formed in 1997-2001 began as a cohabitation rather than as a marriage." (National Health Statistics Report, 2012)
- Between 1960-2010, the number of cohabiting couples increased 17-fold. (The State of Our Unions 2011, 75)

Sources

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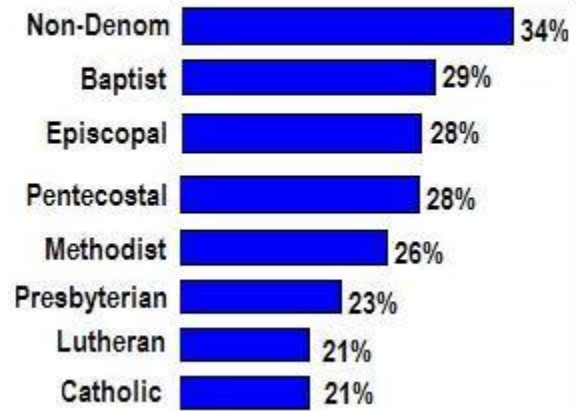
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Scott Stanley, "Sliding vs Deciding" Blog



Divorce Rates by Denomination

Source: Barna Research



Do you believe that divorce is morally acceptable or morally wrong?

