

1 and 2 Thessalonians Lesson 7 3Q 2012

Living Holy Lives

SABBATH

The lesson states, “Paul speaks very clearly about the need to avoid sexual immorality. He’s very strong in his language here saying that those who reject his instruction are, in fact, not rejecting him but the Lord.”

How would you define sexual immorality?

Is it like Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart said in the 1964 case of *Jacobellis vs Ohio*, on the issue of obscenity in the public square:

I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description ["hard-core pornography"]; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But **I know it when I see it**, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that. (Justice Potter Stewart, concurring opinion in *Jacobellis v. Ohio* 378 US 184 (1964), regarding possible obscenity in *The Lovers*.)

Do we know sexual immorality when we see it?

Do you consider the following to be sexually immoral?

- Obviously sexual assault/abuse/molestation of any kind is immoral
- Paraphilia’s? (pedophilia, voyeurism, frotteurism)
 - What is not practiced but fantasized about?
 - What happens to the brain, character, if focus on such material?
- What about Adultery?
 - 22 percent of married men *admit* to having an affair
 - 14 percent of married women *admit* to having an affair

- However, a 2002 study found that 45-55% of married women and 50-60% of married men engage in extramarital sex at some time during their marriage (Atwood & Schwartz, 2002 - Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy)
- Only 46% of men believe that online affairs are adultery. (DivorceMag)
 - What do you think?
 - What would contribute to the idea that online affairs are not adultery?
 - Could it be teachings – even in the church, that the only way to commit adultery is through physical sex? What some call “violation of the marriage bed”?
- According to a private investigative company who investigated thousands of people for infidelity:
 - 99.9 percent of those who commit adultery deny they are having an affair and attempt to hide the truth! The exception is when they confess without being forced into it.
 - 70-80 percent who willingly confess to infidelity recovery and enjoy a stronger marriage in time.
 - What are the implications of these stats? Denial and deception reveal a heart continuing to operate from selfishness – thus no heart change, voluntary confession is a step toward honesty and truthfulness, with increased likelihood of repentance and heart change to live other-centered rather than self-centered lives, thus the voluntary confession increases the change of a healthy outcome.
- Prostitution – is prostitution immoral?
 - Have you heard about Logan Campbell – an Olympian from New Zealand competing in taekwondo?
 - After returning from the Beijing Olympics he had bills from travel, equipment, and training

of over \$120,000 and preparation to go to the London Olympics was going to cost another \$200,000. What to do?

- He opened a brothel – which is legal in New Zealand
 - He came under scrutiny from the New Zealand Olympic committee and the publicity resulted in large corporate donations to they taekwondo fund and therefore he sold his brothel on 2011
 - When asked about it he said, "It's a legal business in New Zealand. It's completely different from other countries in the world. There was no – I don't know – no one was forced into the industry, and they're not doing it because they are in poverty because we have a really good welfare system. It's more of like a higher-class thing than you see around the world. I think a lot of people don't understand that. As compared ... to places like Thailand [where] I know what it's like in the poorer countries, where people don't have a choice to get into that sort of industry. But in New Zealand it's completely different, so it's fine."
 - He said his parents didn't object to him running the brothel, especially after his mother met several of the women who worked for him. He said, "I've never had anyone in New Zealand be like, 'Why did you do that? That's not right,' or anything like that."
(<http://sports.yahoo.com/news/olympics--new-zealander-used-brothel-to-fund-olympic-taekwondo-training.html>)
 - Do we recognize sexual immorality when we see it?
- Premarital sex?

- According to the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found the percentage of high school students who have engaged in sexual activity to be:
 - 32.8% of 9th graders
 - 43.8% of 10th graders
 - 55.5% of 11th graders
 - 64.6% of 12th graders
- The average teen watches 15,000 sexual acts on TV and in movies per year – and studies show that the more sexual content in the programming the younger kids have sex. Is it immoral for parents to let their children watch such programming?
- Do we recognize sexual immorality when we see it?
- Playboy magazine and others like it?
- Pornographic video, internet?
 - \$57 billion annual worldwide industry
 - 25% of all web searches are for porn
 - What about if done in anime?
 - What happens to the brain, character if use porn, even anime porn?
- Sports illustrated swimsuit edition?
- Victoria Secrets TV show?
- Victoria Secret stores?
- Cheerleaders at ball games? Outfits that are sexually provocative? Is this sexually immoral?
- Advertising with sexually provocative content?
- R Rated Movies?
- Flirting with someone when married?
- Flirting with someone when single?
- Lewd jokes?
- Music with sexual references and innuendo?
- Homosexuality?
- Sex change operation?
- Self-gratification?

MONDAY's lesson at the bottom states, "The word for 'sexual immorality' is *porneia* in the Greek, which would today cover

everything from pornography to prostitution, to any sexual activity outside of marriage.”

Can you have sexual immorality within marriage?

This is a comment from a founder of this church:

- Because they have entered into the marriage relation, many think that they may permit themselves to be controlled by animal passions. They are led on by Satan, who deceives them and leads them to pervert this sacred institution. He is well pleased with the low level which their minds take; for he has much to gain in this direction. {1MCP 224.3}

He knows that if he can excite the baser passions and keep them in the ascendancy, he has nothing to be troubled about in their Christian experience; for the moral and intellectual faculties will be subordinate, while the animal propensities will predominate and keep in the ascendancy; and these baser passions will be strengthened by exercise, while the nobler qualities will become weaker and weaker.--2T 480 (1870). {1MCP 224.4}

- Thoughts? Agree, disagree? Why?
- Can sex within marriage be immoral? Can sex within marriage be damaging to husband and wife? Yes, what factors would contribute to damaging changes of sex within a marriage?
 - Selfishness – when the partner is seen as an object rather than a person
 - When sex is about self, not about loving the other
 - When domination, control, humiliation is involved
 - When sex violates the dignity of the other
 - When coercion is used
 - When sex is abusive
 - When genuine love is absent and fear is present
 - Why? – because oxytocin and vasopressin, neurochemicals that promote bonding is released

when sex happens within a loving marriage. These brain chemicals prevent negative brain changes we see in addiction, including sexual addiction. But, the release of oxytocin and vasopressin is impaired when fear circuits fire. The fear circuits fire when selfishness increases, but the Anterior Cingulate Cortex, where we experience other-centered love, turns off the fear circuits. So, sex in a loving marriage results in bonding of the two people and no pathological brain changes, but sex outside a loving marriage results in fear circuit firing, reduction in oxytocin/vasopressin and increased pathological brain changes consistent with addiction.

- What about homosexual marriage? If the states make it legal is it then okay?
 - Can a person be saved if they are actively engaged in ongoing sexual immorality? (i.e. they never give it up?)
- Polygamy?
 - Was it immoral when Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon did it?
 - Did Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon ever give it up?
 - Were they saved?
 - What does this mean? How could they be? Did they ever give it up?
 - If polygamy is immoral then how could they be saved in such relationships?
 - Is polygamy immoral if it is legal in the country where it is practiced?
 - What about David and Bathsheba? Immoral for David to have adulterous relationship with her? Why, was it not immoral, and sinful, for him to marry her?
 - Because in that culture a woman had no standing. What David did to Bathsheba, by the affair, and by murdering Uriah, was to take from her her dignity, station

in society, financial security, income, sustenance. If he would have not married her he would have acted selfishly. It was an act of redemptive love, to as far as possible restore to Bathsheba what he had taken, and he could do this only by marrying her.

- This is level six moral development thinking. Level four people can't understand this. It confuses them, because the rules say polygamy is sin, and sin is bad, and must be punished. But God operates on principles and principles of love are not bound by rules.
- So the OT people who practiced polygamy were saved because they experienced a change in heart where they died to self and loved others more than self. Thus, self-gratification no longer controlled them.
- Sexual immorality will keep someone from eternal life, if such activity prevents heart transformation – which it will do, unless overcome. In the case of polygamy, they overcame the carnal drives, but the circumstance was such that to rid themselves of their wives would have been an additional act of selfishness. So they instead loved and protected their wives.
- This has been a difficult issue in the church in places in the world where polygamy is practiced. I have read that in some regions where polygamy is legal a man cannot become a Adventist if he has more than one wife, so this has led to some individuals casting aside his least favorite wives. Others advocate for

allowing membership if all the wives voluntarily want to stay.

So, how would you define sexual immorality? Would it not be actions, thoughts, behaviors, attitudes that degrade and destroy the image of God within you or another? Activities, practices, thought processes which increase selfishness and decrease genuine other centered love?

SUNDAY

The lesson speaks of Paul's desire for the believers to abound more and more in love, holiness, and Christian unity with one another looking forward to Christ's return.

What does this love look like?

What interferes with this type of love?

- Our biological drive to watch out for self
- Misunderstanding – perceiving threat when none exists
- Miseducation – what we have learned throughout life which biases us against others
- Business of life
- The false America dream –
 - The America dream is to have your own home, car, TV, capitalism, to get stuff. The more stuff the happier, and here, you can have a car loan, a mortgage, a loan for furniture, a credit card all in order for you to fulfill your dream and get stuff.
 - It is a lie, a trap, debt enslaves, and obstructs our ability to give freely to others because we are too busy worrying about paying our bills to have time to volunteer to help others.

Paul is pointing the Thessalonians toward an eternal dream, the hope of Christ's return, a universe in which there is no selfishness, pain, suffering, debt, in which all love each other more than self.

This should be our dream, our hope, our focus, our passion!

MONDAY

Read first paragraph, “First Thessalonians....” Thoughts?

What do you think of the idea that sexual immorality is a bad idea because God will take vengeance upon you if you do it?

If that is true that God will use his power to exact vengeance on those who have struggled with sexual immorality? if we could just only get Jesus to persuade God not to be so vengeful, to be kind and gracious, then there would be nothing wrong with sexual immorality – right? WRONG!!!!

Is the problem with sexual immorality (or immorality of any kind) that God will be the avenger or that such actions is out of harmony with God’s design and is inherently destructive?

This idea is closely related to another myth about God and sex, namely that children come forth from God’s action, or another way to say it, God causes pregnancy, or God creates babies, or children are a gift from God.

What is the more precise truth? That procreative ability is a gift from God, which he leaves the human agent free to use as the human being chooses – in harmony with God’s design or out of harmony. As the lesson states at the bottom of the page, *sexuality* is a gift from God.

Should a woman who is raped and becomes pregnant turn to God and thank him for being raped?

Sexuality is a gift, and as all gifts, God leaves us free to use or abuse the gift. If we abuse the gift of sexuality are there damaging consequences? Like what?

- STDs

- Damaged self-respect
- Altered intimacy and ability to love others
- Damaged self image
- Pregnancy
- Children being born without loving parents
- Damaged character
- Seared conscience
- Others?

If you are interested in reading more about the impact of pornography on the brain I recommend a book, *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* by William M. Struthers. Very well done.

TUESDAY

The lesson points out that Paul admonishes the Thessalonians not to be like Gentiles. What do you think this means?

The lesson states, “Gentile society as a whole had little or no sexual restraint in Paul’s day.”

And later the lesson states, “In today’s world many find sexual restraint of any kind distasteful.”

Thoughts?

Are we as Christians to be different than the non-believing world? Are we?

He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel are doing in the darkness, each at the shrine of his own idol? They say, ‘The LORD does not see us; the LORD has forsaken the land.’” Again, he said, “You will see them doing things that are even more detestable.” (Eze 8:12-13).

What kinds of things were they struggling with in the darkness? Was it sexual immorality? And who was struggling? The elders – would this have any application to the church today?

How are Christians different than non-believers?

- Affirm a belief in God
- Practice religious observances, Sabbath, church attendance, baptism, communion, holy-days, give tithes offerings etc.
- Education?
- Beliefs about marriage

How are we not different?

- Born in a terminal condition suffering from the same problem and needing the same solution
- Church has same level of problems as the world – abuse, addiction, obesity,
- Dress?
- What we watch, read, and games we play?
- How we invest our money and time?
- Our debt to income ratio?
- Our expectations for government and community?

Are there areas we need to change to be more Godly and less worldly?

WEDNESDAY

Sexual beings according to God's design.

Have you ever thought why God made us the way he did?

What is the primary purpose of sex? Is it primarily about pleasure? Or is it about something else?

- Reproduction?
- Intimacy? “The two shall become one flesh”?
- Does this design say anything about God?
- Does the way God made Adam and Eve have any higher meaning than mere physical pleasure? Is it also an object lesson for:
 - I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that **all of them may be one**, Father, just as **you are in me and I am in you**. May **they also be in us** so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that **they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me**. May they be brought to **complete unity** to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (Jn 17:20-23)

Read last paragraph, “On the other hand...” thoughts?

Are there problems when people believe sex is primarily about pleasure?

Studies suggest that worldwide 7-39% of men visit a prostitute sometime in their life, many become long term customers of the same prostitute.

Why do men often turn to prostitutes and pornography?

- Because they want physical gratification without commitment or responsibility.
- It avoids the fear of rejection
- It is straightforward exchange with no hidden expectations, and no after experience arguments or expectations.

Sex alters one’s mood and neurochemistry, and sexual gratification with porn or a prostitute results in neurological changes increasing sexual addiction, and loss of self-control.

THURSDAY

The title for the day is “Mind Your Own Business.” What do you think about the title?

Read last paragraph states, “Paul’s solution to the Thessalonian problem was to encourage them to be ambitious (‘aspire’), not for power or influence but to live a ‘quiet life’ (4:11) that would involve minding one’s own business and working with one’s hands.”

Thoughts?

What does it mean to mind one’s own business?

- To purposely ignore the needs of those around?
- To pretend others have no issues or problems?
- To not offer to help?
- Is the idea of minding one’s own business about being a hermit, isolating from others, disengaging from others?
- Or is it about only being involved in healing, loving, redemptive, supportive, and nurturing ways – while not hurting others; we don’t gossip, rumormonger, or meddle in the free will choices of others?
- But, do we intercede in love to help someone struggling?

What about on a community level – are we to mind our own business when the government goes to war, passes laws that infringe on personal liberty?

How do the Amish stay so disengaged and uninvolved? Is there culture a healthy Christian model or is it too extreme? Why or why not?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-3

