

May 28, 2017 – Pastor Randy

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Ephesians 5:1-6

*Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

In chapter 5 Paul continues his instruction regarding the attitudes and behaviors that God's people need to unclot themselves of and the new ones that they need to put on.

In 5:1 Paul rephrased what he had written in ch. 4; the Christian is expected to "walk" like Jesus Christ, the one that he calls Lord and Savior. He writes,

**WALK IN LOVE JUST LIKE CHRIST LOVED YOU.** Then Paul elaborates, describing the outgrowth of walking in love. Love demands that we do away with both sexual immorality - both in practice and in conversation - and greed. A life of sexual purity does not repress love, it is an expression of genuine love.

Last week we saw that Jesus calls us to put off greed and to put on generosity. Now we turn our focus on the need to undress ourselves of sexual immorality and put on the clothes of sexual purity.

One of the problems we face today is that our translations have become inadequate due to the fact that the definition of sexual immorality has been so radically redefined. When the scripture calls us to abstain from sexual immorality it is referring to sexual conduct outside of the covenant of marriage. Today, that definition no longer suffices because we have

redefined marriage. Now we have to add a qualifier to the word marriage; the covenant between one man and one woman.

Fallacies about sexual morality

Myth #1. Sexual morality is determined merely by consent. The rationale being that, as long as there is consent rather than coercion among adult participants, no one gets hurt.

James Robison, in his book *The Absolutes*, quotes a Planned Parenthood pamphlet instructing teens, “Sex with victims is always wrong. Sex without victims is always right.” This is utter simplistic nonsense. The implication is that casual, non-committed sex is appropriate so long as it is consensual. It treats sex as just another recreational activity, ignoring the varied and complex physical, emotional and psychological ramifications of sexual intimacy. The great fallacy lies in assuming that just because no one is harmed immediately and directly, there is therefore the behavior is not harmful. In reality, a lot of harm comes from consensual sexual conduct.

A. Perfectly consensual sex has resulted in an epidemic of STD’s

“We have reached a decisive moment for our nation” said Dr. Jonathan Mermin, director of CDC’s National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention. “STD rates are rising, and many of the country’s systems for preventing STDs have eroded. We must mobilize, rebuild and expand services – or the human and economic burden will continue to grow.”

According to the most recent research published by the CDC, STDs are a substantial health challenge facing the United States. CDC estimates that nearly 20 million new sexually transmitted infections occur every year in this country, half among young people aged 15–24,

STD’s account for almost \$16 billion in health care costs. Each of these infections is a potential threat to an individual’s immediate and long-term health and well-being. There is a great physical cost in addition to the financial cost.

B. Perfectly consensual sex leads to out-of-wedlock pregnancies which account for a great % of the almost one million abortions performed each year. That accounts for a lot of victims whose voice is never heard.

C. Perfectly consensual sex leads to immense emotional pain when one of the parties involved discovers afterwards they were just being used, not loved as they thought. They didn't feel like a victim in the moment, but only discovered their victimization later on.

D. Many spouses deceive themselves into believing their adulterous relationships are victimless, until their spouse finds out and marriages and families are broken up.

These are not just statistics or hypotheticals for me. I have listened to the pain-filled voice and looked into the pain-filled eyes of someone whose spouse began a "consensual sexual relationship" with another person. The husband contracted an STD as a result of this "consensual affair" which he passed along to his spouse. During the initial stage of the affair, there was no apparent victim. By the end there was a whole family of victims.

**Myth #2. Waiting for marriage, and fidelity within marriage is unrealistic.**

**The Truth:** A lot of people are doing it. No one is saying it is easy, but it can be achieved. However, it will never be achieved until the individual determines that it ought to be done. We need to face the fact that it is not a matter of CAN, we but WILL we. **Illustration:** I met with a man who was leaving his wife. I shared some things he could do to try and bring reconciliation. He said, "I can't". I said, of course you can do this. Now if you are unwilling to then don't say, "I can't", say "I won't." He sat for a moment and looked at me and said, Pastor Randy, you are right. "I won't do it".

**Myth #3. Limiting sex to the confines of marriage is repressive and oppressive.**

Walter Wink, a liberal theologian who died a few years ago, is just one representative of a growing number of people who argue that the prohibition on sexual activity outside marriage is oppressive. He described the act of calling Christians to exercise fidelity within marriage and abstinence outside

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as “a cruel religious abuse of power”. He, and many others suggest it is cruel to “sexually starve people”. The sad thing about his statement, as a professed Christian theologian and leader, is that it lays the greatest guilt for this supposed “cruel abuse of religious power” at the feet of Jesus. Jesus taught that not only should sexual conduct be confined to marriage, but sexual cravings must be as well. People are not oppressed by sexual boundaries, but by the elimination of those boundaries. I have already presented just a few examples of the oppression caused by removing God’s ordained boundaries.

There is a prevalent lie out there that goes like this: “An unchosen desire must be a legitimate desire to fulfill. If God didn’t intend for me to fulfill these desires he wouldn’t have given them to me.” Does it require us to resist certain desires? Yes! But life is full of appetites that must be resisted. You have to restrain your urge to be lazy, you have to restrain your urges to give in to impulses of anger and greed. All healthy, productive living is an exercise in self-restraint. If I did everything I felt like doing, I would have destroyed my life and family by now. One of key signs of maturity is when a person is able to say NO to himself rather than needing to be told NO by another. Let me say one more thing. It is only the grace of God that has kept me from giving in to destructive selfish impulses.

The foundational principle that lies at the heart of the issue for the Christian is revealed in 1 Corinthians 6:16-20,

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? ***You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.***

That last statement settles the issue for the Christian. We are not our own, we belong to God, and our lives are to be lived to glorify Him in response to His grace that has been poured out in our lives.

### *God's Three-fold Purpose for Sex*

1. **To glorify God.** Every aspect of the Christians life, even his/her sex life, is to be lived for the glory of God. This can be said to be the ultimate and primary reason for sex, just as it is the primary and ultimate reason for everything! The real question is “How?” “How does sex glorify God?” The answer is when it fulfills God’s secondary purposes for it.

2. **To express love between a husband and wife.** God designed sex to effect a spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical bond between a man and a woman. This loving bond is enhanced by due to the intensity of sexual passion pleasure. In the Song of Solomon, love is used repeatedly as a synonym for the sexual union, revealing God’s intention for sex to be an expression of love. When sex functions as it should, strengthening the bond of love in a marriage, it glorifies God because the intimate loving unity of the marriage relationship is designed to reflect Christ’s love for His church. To summarize, the purpose of sex is to enhance the loving bond in the marriage relationship so that the marriage relationship can fulfill its purpose of reflecting the love of Christ for His church.

3. **To be the means of procreation.** Sexual intimacy, as it enhances the bond between husband and wife, helps to foster the ideal environment for children to be nurtured and raised. Children fare best when they are raised by a father and mother who have a deep physical, psychological, and emotional bond with each other, and with the children born into that union. The purpose of marriage is to provide a healthy environment for the creation, nurturing, and training of children to become mature image bearers of God. It is no accident that this bond-forming act becomes the means by which new life is created.

However, because sexual passion is so intense it has a potentially destructive side as well. The Bible speaks of sexual passion an analogous to “fire”; Burning with lust. Like fire this passion can be beneficial but also highly

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destructive. Fire can provide light and warmth. It can be used to sanitize objects and the food we eat. But it must always be in a contained environment. When cooking, the fire is good under the pot, but when the fire is in the pot...not so much. For the past 24 years we have lived in a home with either a fireplace or a wood burning stove. We love to build fires in our house but in the winter of 2010-11 we couldn't because we were in an apt. with no fireplace. If you are going to have a fire in the house, you want to have it contained in a fireplace, right! When it is in the fireplace it brings beauty and warmth to the entire family. A fire in your house is good, if it is in the fireplace...but not so much if it is NOT contained to the fireplace. The sexual relationship enhances the loving bond between a husband and wife which in turn creates a stable loving atmosphere in the home that is essential to the well being of the children generated from that union. This passion needs to be placed in the container of committed love. When it is nothing more than lustful passion, it leads to degrading and dehumanizing other people. When Jesus spoke critically of men who gaze lustfully after women he wasn't just concerned with the fact that lust often leads to acts of physical immorality. He was concerned with lust in and of itself!

Lust tends to objectify people, and in doing so it dehumanizes them. Lust leads to viewing another person as an object, not as a person created in God's image. This is one huge problem with pornography. It turns people into objects for personal consumption. It dehumanizes and degrades. Chris Rock and Terry Crews are two famous actors who have recently publically confessed that pornography use ruined their marriages and messed up their minds.

The pursuit of purity begins with renewing our minds so that we begin to look at people as our God looks at them, and to love them as God loves them. When we are walking clothed with God's love we will serve others rather than try to use them to serve us and our desires. The pursuit of purity also requires us to establish boundaries and make decisions which mitigate against the temptation. The scripture counsels us to "flee" from temptation. Most affairs begin with the forming of emotional attachments. You don't reap adulterous behavior without the seeds of suggestive and seductive

conversation. This why in our text Paul warns us to put away sexually crude joking and talk. Guard your conversations. Guard your thoughts. Guard your eyes.

David said, “I will set no worthless thing before my eyes.” Paul wrote to the Colossians, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth”. He then went on to explain what he meant by the “things of earth”: They included sexual immorality & impure passions. You can’t control the thoughts that come knocking on your door, but you can control which ones you welcome into your home...and we certainly have no excuse for setting a place at the table for them.

Pray: “Lord I will make every effort to walk in purity.”

You need the help of others too. Men and women, give your wives access to your devices. If necessary subscribe to ‘Covenant Eyes, a program that creates accountability partners for those struggling with internet pornography.

But you and I can’t do this on our own. We also need to pray:

“Lord, I need your help!!!”