

MORALITY

A Study of Virtuous Conduct for Christians

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I. Principles In Moral Excellence

What is morality? Morality pertains to a code of conduct that distinguishes right from wrong. The original New Testament word for morality is ARETE and is sometimes translated "virtue," "excellence," or "goodness." W. E. Vine describes it as that which results in a high esteem from others. J. H. Thayer refers to it as goodness in thought and action. In the world today, most people live by a standard of right and wrong based on their own personal judgment. This is the way it was during the period of the Judges, when "everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

This lesson will preview the basic principles that form the framework of a proper attitude toward morality. Many of these points will have a specific bearing upon each moral issue that is later discussed in greater detail and should flavor our approach to the study of each.

A. Sin

1. What Is Sin?

- Missing the target - *James 4:17*
- Going outside God's authority - *1 John 3:4*

Sinful behavior is often condemned on the basis of general principles, not specific prohibitions. Some, attempting to justify their actions, will proclaim that the Bible nowhere states that such-and-such is absolutely sinful. The Bible does not necessarily have to mention a particular behavior by name for us to determine that it is unquestionably sin.

2. Sin's Progressive Process

The Bible describes the stepwise process of how sin can enter and affect our life - *James 1:14, 15*:

1. Temptation – the starting point: a testing or proving of our faith.
2. A drawing away – literally, taking the bait.
3. An appealing to our own desires
4. A giving in to our desires
5. Sin – the result of lust conceived
6. Death – the result of sin fully grown

3. Sin's Categories

The Bible also puts sin into three categories - *1 John 2:16*:

1. The lust of the flesh
2. The lust of the eyes
3. The pride of life

These are not of the Father but of the world.

B. Standards Of Conduct

1. Worldliness And Godliness

God calls us away from sin to a higher standard. The world's standard for proper conduct is not God's standard. Note the contrast from scripture between the world and godliness:

Romans 12:2 (not conformed, but transformed)

1 John 2:15, 17 (not the world's will, but God's will)

Conduct matters, and our standard of godly behavior is not based on what everyone else may be doing. Your peers may try to pressure you to go along with a certain activity. If the only reason you can give for why you think it should be okay is because a bunch of other people are doing it, perhaps it is not according to God's standard.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13

2. **Flesh And Spirit**

A sampling of worldly deeds motivated by the flesh is compared in scripture with godly fruit motivated by the Spirit:

Galatians 5:19-22; Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Note that, in case any evil deed was specifically omitted by name, it is included in the phrase "and the like." We will be examining many of these things in greater detail in lessons to come. It should be evident from these passages that God's intention is not that we merely refrain from that which is wrong but that we are fully occupied by those things which are good and wholesome. If we are not actively involved in things that are good, the bad will creep right back in.

3. **Be Different**

When we make alive within us the distinction between flesh and spirit, between worldliness and godliness, people will be able to see that we are different. This peculiarity is not something we should ever be ashamed of or try to conceal but rather welcome and embrace. We are a people of God's own possession; we should therefore act like it.

Titus 2:14, 15
("Peculiar" in the KJV does not mean to be odd but rather to be selected as a possession).

2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1

If the world sees you as no different from anyone else in the world, maybe you're actually one of them.

1 Peter 4:4 ...they think it strange...

Matthew 5:14-16 Let your light so shine...

Matthew 7:16-21 ...by their fruits you will know them...

4. **Deny a Fleshly Mindset**

It ought not be the Christian's quest to fulfill every physical desire.

Matthew 16:24

Romans 8:5-14

Galatians 2:20

5. **Self-control**

The original New Testament word for "self-control" is EGKRATEIA and is translated as "temperance" in the King James Version. J. H. Thayer defines it as "the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions." God calls upon us to restrain ourselves; we are to be keepers of our own minds and bodies.

1 John 5:18

James 1:27

God places within each of us by nature certain physical desires, urges, and cravings. He also provides a lawful way of fulfilling each one of them. Nevertheless, He has also given us the free moral choice of fulfilling these desires unlawfully. The significance is this: God does not want a race of robots who do His will mindlessly; He wants a race of people who make a conscious and intelligent choice to serve Him against their natural urge to run recklessly.

The main purpose of this study is to show the dire consequences of immoral behavior; the by-product of this study will be to understand that it is ultimately far more fulfilling for us to satisfy these desires lawfully than unlawfully.

C. **The Good Life**

A study of morality might seem at first glance to be a listing of all the pleasurable things in life a Christian is restricted from doing. For examples, as the study progresses, we will see that a Christian ought not bet on horse races, tell dirty jokes, smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, dress indecently or immodestly, dance lewdly, engage in premarital sex, or do many of the other fun things people of the world do. To the contrary, this study will reveal that the very best way to live a life set free to the fullest on this earth is to live it in subjection to God. The simple fact is that we all ultimately

must be a slave to something. Bob Dylan once wrote, "You're gonna have to serve somebody, Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, But you're gonna have to serve somebody." These words have a sound, scriptural basis. Jesus states that whoever is not with Him is against Him. Paul writes that we will either be slaves to the flesh or slaves to the Spirit.

Matthew 12:30

Romans 6:16-23

God has our best interest at heart when He asks us to submit to His will. Eternal life is the end result, but death is the inevitable end of serving the flesh. Proverbs 13:15 says, "The way of the unfaithful is hard." If we will follow God's instructions in life, we will be spared much hardship. Living for the flesh has brought many people to ruin. Lying has ruined trust, jealousy has ruined relationships, greed has ruined careers, lust has ruined marriages, drug abuse has ruined health, gambling has ruined fortunes, indecency has ruined influence, and pre-marital sex has ruined youthfulness. Doing these things is actually no fun at all and in no way sets us free. In contrast, godliness is the true pathway to a fulfilled life indeed. Read carefully Paul's instructions to the young evangelist:

1 Timothy 6:3-19

D. Making Moral Decisions

One of the most difficult things for a young person in today's society is to decide what is right and wrong. The world tries to obscure the distinction between good and bad so that many Christians do not know which way to turn. Consider these five questions before making a decision.

1. Is it obviously wrong?

The point earlier that not every sin is prohibited by a specific command is overshadowed by the fact that many are. If you know an activity will violate a clear command of God, you need to leave it alone.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Colossians 3:5-9

2. Is it wholesome?

If you cannot honestly say it is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, or praiseworthy, reconsider what you're about to do. Ask yourself if you think the activity will strengthen your faith or if it could lead you away from God.

Philippians 4:8

3. Will it violate my conscience?

Our conscience should be trained by a knowledge of the Bible, but what if we're not sure? If the thought enters your mind that an activity might be wrong, do not engage in it until you learn more. Chances are, if you think it might be wrong, it probably is. If in doubt, leave it out. Regardless, it is sinful to go against your conscience whether a thing is truly wrong or not.

Romans 14:23

James 4:17

4. Would I want others to know I am doing it?

Things done in secret never stay that way. Besides, even if no one else sees, God does. Ask yourself if you would want to be doing it if your parents saw you.

Ecclesiastes 12:14

Hebrews 4:13

1 Timothy 5:24, 25

5. What would I want to be doing when Jesus comes again?

- Worshipping God?
- Studying His word?

- Involved in wholesome entertainment?
- Doing chores or schoolwork?
- Committing some act of immorality?

2 Corinthians 5:10

2 Peter 3:10-12

E. Influence

Influence can work both ways: I can have a good influence on others, or I can allow others to have a bad influence on me. In every situation, we will have to make a judgment about which way those scales will tip. We certainly need to sometimes be in the presence of ungodly people; work, school, or even family occasionally demands it. Also, it is a way we can teach by example. However, when we find ourselves tempted by those around us and we feel like we're losing control, we must find the way of escape the Lord provides.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Before we willingly place ourselves in a situation of strong temptation, we should think ahead what can be our possible way out. For some situations, it's more wise to stay out than to have to get out. Moreover, we deceive ourselves if we think ungodly friends will not have a bad effect upon us. Choose your friends carefully.

1 Corinthians 15:33

F. Avoid Evil

Some people try to see how close they can get without crossing the line. Do not flirt with sin.

1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22

This passage teaches that we are to avoid, stay away from, and shun sin in every shape, form, and fashion in which it appears, not to draw near to it. This is a point that will especially have application as we study each specific moral issue.

Sin is a hidden, deadly danger with eternal consequences. If there was an exposed known danger, for example, a deep, open pit or ledge where you could easily fall to your death, you would probably not see how close you could get without actually falling, and you would certainly not amble carelessly along or make sport of its edge where one unsteady step could bring disaster. You would probably consider what is a reasonable safe distance with a margin for error and stay yet even somewhat further from that point. How much more should sin be avoided with consequences more grave than physical death?

Proverbs 6:27

G. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. Try to define sin in your own words.
2. What exactly is lust? Is it limited to only certain kinds of sin?
3. Explain the possible differences between the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.
4. In Romans 12:2, what does it mean to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind?"
5. Do you behave differently around some of your friends than you do with others, for example when you're with Christians and when you're not? If so, why?
6. Why has the world's standard of what is right and wrong changed so much?

7. Is there anything wrong with the philosophy that all young people need to go through a phase of "sowing wild oats?"

8. Will you be able to control every situation in which you find yourself?

II. Honesty And Lying

A serious moral issue that touches every aspect of a Christian's life is the great need for honesty. This affects us in every way - in school, at work, in the church, and in the family.

2 Corinthians 8:21; 13:7

We have all heard the familiar phrase - "honesty is the best policy." We want to notice from the Bible that this adage is not so trite but divinely true. Admittedly, honesty is not always the easiest road to take, but it's the right course in the long run. Let's compare honest and dishonest behavior.

A. Lying

1. What is lying?

The original New Testament word for "lie" is PSEUDOS in the noun form and PSEUDOMAI in the verb form. Thayer indicates that this means a "conscious and intentional falsehood... in a broad sense, whatever is not what it seems to be... of perverse, impious, deceitful precepts." The word for "liar" is PSEUSTES, which Thayer defines as "one who breaks faith." A lie is when we know what is true yet speak to the contrary for impure motives. It therefore involves our will, as it is deliberate action.

Small children seem to instinctively learn to lie from almost the time they know how to speak, even without the bad example of lying parents. It's even worse with siblings in the house: both brother and sister conveniently deny making the mess on the floor. Nevertheless, they also instinctively know it is wrong. Consider these Bible passages that teach lying is sinful:

Ephesians 4:25

Colossians 3:9

John 8:44

Know this: if lying is wrong and sinful, we can lose our soul for doing it. Liars are listed along with murderers as hell's inhabitants.

Revelation 21:8

2. What lying is not

Lying is not simply saying that which is not true. We might be ignorant of a certain thing unaware and say something false, though we sincerely believe it to be true. This is not a lie. By definition, lying is a conscious stating of untruth.

Lying is not joking or teasing. Sometimes we may say something that is untrue in humor or in irony. For example, untruths are often told in arranging surprise birthday parties, but the truth is always revealed in the end. These are not lies. By definition, lying involves perverseness, and there are no evil intentions by these things.

Lying is not to be confused with covert tactics in military espionage or protection against criminals. Undercover law enforcement agents are required to conceal facts by diversion and extract information by deception. National or personal security often depends upon it. The untruth told by Rahab is an example (Joshua 2:1-6), and she is commended in scripture for her faith (Hebrews 11:31). The untruth told by Elisha to the Syrian army at Dothan is another example, even executed with miraculous divine assistance (2 Kings 6:13-23). Similarly, Jesus uses clandestine methods on the road to Emmaus to create a situation "not what it seems to be," yet not equivalent to lying or deceit, having no malice or self-promoting intent (Luke 24:13-31). Likewise, if a burglar breaks in and asks if there is money hidden or other family members in the house, a Christian does not need to answer "yes." Such are not lies, because they do nothing perverse or impious to break faith.

People who would use these examples to teach the situational ethic that lying is sometimes acceptable depending on the circumstance do not truly understand what lying is and what it is not. The world's standard of morality is clearly different from God's.

B. Why Do People Lie?

Why do people lie, even sometimes when they know it's wrong? Let's explore some possible reasons:

1. People lie to cover their sin.

This never works. Lying is a trap; once you lie, you will have to lie again to conceal your lie. Perhaps the reason we lie again is because, oddly enough, since we know it's wrong, we want to hide that we have done it. It's better to never lie

in the first place. If you do something bad, don't lie to cover it up. The punishment for the deed alone will be easier than the punishment for both the deed and the lie.

Proverbs 28:13

So let's say you're lucky enough that you never have to lie again to cover up a lie. You're still not out of trouble. Once you tell a lie, it does not go away on its own. The people to whom you have lied can go on for the rest of their lives believing it, and the fault remains upon you. God doesn't just forget about it; the lie goes on unforgiven until you do something about it:

- Forgiveness requires repentance - *Acts 3:19*
- Repentance involves correcting the wrong - *Philemon 18*
- Correction calls for confessing to those you offended - *James 5:16*

Do not deceive yourself into thinking this sin can be forgiven without divulging it; you can't sin without consequence.

1 John 1:9

Besides, sooner or later, our unrepentant sins will inevitably be found out, one way or another.

1 Timothy 5:24

2. People lie to obtain an advantage.

The heart of this problem is pride and selfishness. To do this, we sell ourselves over to Satan.

Proverbs 23:23

James 3:14

Taking the credit for something we do to which we have no right is the same as cheating, more on that later.

Acts 4:36 - 5:5

Saving money is one of the strongest motives for lying. It's especially tempting at tax time.

3. People lie because it's easy to do and often difficult to detect.

What a small part of the body the mouth is, and how easy it is to open it and let words come out.

James 1:26; 2:2-8

"Bridle" means to hold in check, restrain.

Ananias and Sapphira learned the hard way that, though you may be able to fool men, God knows your true deeds.

Hebrews 4:13

4. People lie to avoid confrontation.

Whatever our circumstance, we can always find a way of speaking truthfully without needlessly hurting someone. Remember, also, that telling the truth does not necessarily require speaking everything that is on our mind.

Proverbs 29:11

Literally: "A fool brings out all his mind..."

Observe how Samuel in a delicate situation is instructed by the Lord to be prepared to answer King Saul's question truthfully but avoid divulging things that could anger him, which were none of his business anyway:

1 Samuel 16:1

Samuel's example teaches us we need to think before we speak. Sometimes in a difficult situation, the first thing we might think to say is a lie. Make the determination ahead of time that, no matter what, lying is not an option.

5. People lie to stay out of trouble.

We discussed earlier that stating a falsehood to a criminal attacker or as an undercover law enforcement agent does not fit the definition of lying. We also noted that telling the truth does not always require divulging the whole heart. Part of the reason for this is because it is not the business of the people involved to need to know those things in the first place. However, what if it involves someone in authority whose right it is to know, such as a parent or a boss?

This would be the case if we were testifying in civil court on the witness stand. The judge is expecting to hear "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Remember that the definition of "lie" includes "...in a broad sense, whatever is not what it seems to be." Telling fragments of truth in order to leave the wrong impression in these cases is equal to lying, and that means it is sin.

Furthermore, the faithful Christian ought never lie about his faith in God to avoid persecution. This would be disgraceful.

Matthew 10:17-39

C. Honesty

1. Honesty With God

Mark Twain once said, "You can't pray a lie." It's absurd to think that we could deceive the all powerful, all knowing God who created all things. He knows what is in our heart before we begin to put it into words.

Luke 16:15

2. Honesty With Others

Honesty begins with the attitude: we must "think honest" to "be honest." Dishonesty shows itself through deceit, hypocrisy, cheating and even stealing.

- Deceit

Deceit involves trickery and craftiness. For example, a deceiver might act sad or disappointed for the purpose of winning attention or favors from others.

1 Peter 3:8-10

- Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is play acting, pretending to be something you're not. There are two ways to show hypocrisy: trying to appear better than we really are and trying to appear worse than we really are. The root of hypocrisy is a lack of sincerity.

1 Peter 2:1-2

James 3:17

- Cheating - Proverbs 11:1; 13:11

Cheaters on classroom tests only hurt themselves because they sidestep learning. We are effectively stealing when we cheat, and it's wrong.

- Stealing - Romans 13:7, 8

For examples: accepting too much change at a store and not paying your debts.

3. Honesty With Self

To be honest with others and with God, we must be honest with ourselves.

- Self deception - *Galatians 6:3-7*
- Hardness of heart - *Luke 8:15*

The word of God only produces results when it falls on an honest heart.

D. The Results

1. Of Dishonesty:

- Friendships are broken.
- Reputations are ruined.
- Families are destroyed.
- Souls are lost.

2. Of Honesty:

- A clear conscience
- An honorable life - *Hebrews 13:18*

E. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. What, exactly, does it mean to lie? Is any untruth spoken a lie? Be prepared to explain your answers.
2. Are some lies worse than others?
3. What is a "half truth?"
4. Can you list some conditions under which it would be okay to lie?
5. What effect does lying have on trust?
6. Is it possible to lie without saying anything?
7. Name various ways we can deceive ourselves.
8. Define "hypocrisy" in your own words.

III. Gambling

Gambling and its effects are all around us every day, enticing us with the prospect of getting something for nothing. You can buy a lottery ticket in most any convenience store and hear all about it on the evening television news. A variety of casinos and race tracks are usually never far away. You can now also do your betting over the Internet. It has even flavored our everyday language: "odds are..."; "five will get you ten." I'll bet you didn't think about that.

The word "gamble" is not found in the Bible, and the student would be hard-pressed to even find an example of it in scripture. So, there is no direct command against the practice. However, just because the word or instance is not found in the Bible does not mean it has nothing to say about it; Bible instruction is typically in the form of principle. For example, in Galatians 5, the apostle lists the works of the flesh, and in verse 21, in case he missed something by name, says "...and things like these." Therefore, we should examine whether gambling is a work of the flesh in principle.

A. Definition

First, we need to define what we mean by the term. Gambling is defined by Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as "to play or game for money or other stake; to hazard; wager." Three key points can be derived from this definition as follows:

1. Something of value to be gained or lost is placed **deliberately in hazard**.
2. Winning is determined by some **arbitrary event of chance** or uncertainty not inherent to the wager.
3. Profits come at the **loss of other participants** without whom there is no gamble.

A typical argument in favor of gambling is that there are many risks we take in everyday life. It can be said, in a sense, that walking across the street is a gamble in which you risk getting hit by a car. Life insurance and the Stock Market are other examples. However, we do not **deliberately** cross the street in order to place ourselves in a **hazard**. No one else gains anything of value we have wagered if we do not successfully negotiate the transaction, and we stand to gain nothing they have wagered if we do. The point is, not everything in life that is a risk or a matter of chance is gambling in the sense under consideration.

Another argument often heard in favor of gambling is that it is just another form of entertainment. Much of what we do for amusement or excitement involves deliberately placing ourselves in hazardous situations. People die almost daily from accidents involving snow skiing, bungee jumping, sky diving, mountain climbing, or motorcycle riding. The point is, not every hazardous activity in life in which we willfully participate for exhilaration is gambling. These situations, though involving **risk**, are not so **arbitrary**. If the rule was that sometimes the roller coaster arbitrarily stays on the track and sometimes it arbitrarily does not, only the suicidally insane would ever ride a roller coaster. Moreover, the gamble is not the event of chance itself; it is the wager against the event of chance. The event itself is essentially beside the point; it can be anything the wagerers agree to.

An important part of the definition is "gaming." Games of chance wherein you stand to win a thing of value always require more than one player; you can't win money playing solitaire. So then, the gambler, by definition, always stands to **gain by other people's loss**. Furthermore, this game is not to be compared, for example, to professional sports, where the prize is earned by a superior performance, and the losing competitors do not provide the purse.

These three elements are most easily seen by the illustration of a gambling game in its most primitive form. (1) Two men willingly agree to contribute one dollar which is pooled into a pot. (2) They agree to base their choosing on a simple coin toss: a chance event having no inherent connection to the money collected. (3) They agree that the one thus winning takes back his dollar plus the dollar the other participant so loses. That is the essence of the gamble. Any activity characterized by these three elements is gambling in the sense being considered. In practice, gambling can become more diverse and complicated with higher stakes, game rules, and weighted odds, but the three basic elements are always there.

B. Principles

Now let's look for some Bible principles that may have a bearing on gambling.

1. Covetousness

Gambling is essentially based on the evil desire to get money or goods which belong to someone else without giving fair value in exchange. The Bible calls this sin "covetousness" and makes it clear that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Romans 1:28-32).

1 Corinthians 6:9, 10

Ephesians 5:5

Colossians 3:5, 6

Note that Paul identifies covetousness as idolatry. Idolatry, in its most basic understanding, is anything that we would love and follow after more than God.

2. Deceit

Not all forms of gambling involve deceit, but many do. Events involving some competitive action of the participants, like billiards, typically do. The hustle, to some, is considered the ultimate gamble, because the odds of winning are thought to be increased. For example, the typical pool hustle is executed by deliberately losing when the stakes are low, thereby concealing the player's true skill level. After a while, when the stakes are very high, the competitor begins to play his best. One might argue that this is therefore not gambling because it is no longer a chance event, but it is; no one knows when the hustler might get hustled. This whole scenario is based on treachery, dishonesty, and deceit, and it's a part of gambling.

Someone may argue that there is nothing wrong with deceiving a deceiver; they get what they deserve. Not so: the faithful Christian behaves uprightly before all men. Consider these verses:

Proverbs 12:20

Proverbs 26:24-27

Mark 7:21-23

1 Peter 2:1

1 Peter 3:8 - 10

The scriptures not only condemn deceit but warn against being deceived. Organized gambling institutions lure patrons with glitzy casinos, lavish hotels, and clever advertisements. They never show the gambler broken down and destitute. Reports indicate that casinos play audio recordings of the clanging coins of a slot machine jackpot hit to make people think winning is a frequent occurrence.

Colossians 2:8

3. Industriousness

For an equitable economic society, God has ordained each citizen to be industrious: engaged in some form of occupation to sustain himself or his family. For examples, the scriptures indicate three legitimate means of providing a livelihood:

1. Wages for labor:

Acts 20:33-35

1 Thessalonians 3:9, 10

1 Thessalonians 4:11

2 Thessalonians 3:7-13

1 Timothy 5:18

Even if a man becomes independently wealthy, the godly man never becomes lazy; he can always work to share his wealth with others. God's plan involves an honorable day's work for a commensurate day's pay. However, the gambler's profits come solely from the labor of others on the basis of chance, not effort.

2. The exchange of things of value: buying and selling investments:

Matthew 25:27

James 4:13, 15

Buying and selling for gain or loss in the Stock Market should not be compared with gambling; they are different in critical ways. Though participation in the Stock Market involves risk and uncertainty, it does not fit the three-point definition of gambling. In stock trading, consider that (1) the money people invest is not pooled for later distribution; it actually buys small parts of companies that produce goods or render services. (2) Furthermore, profits do not come as a result of some arbitrary chance event; they come as a result of the hard work and success of the companies in which they invested. (3) Also, the money people earn in stock trading does not depend upon the losses of others who also have invested.

3. Giving and receiving gifts:

Ephesians 4:28

Acts 2:44, 45

1 Timothy 5:9, 16

The gambler never gives without hoping for something in return.

Luke 6:34

Gambling is none of these things and therefore contrary to God's plan for a legitimate economy.

4. Self Control

Gambling can be addictive. When the gambler senses that he has the real chance of becoming rich beyond his imagination, even as remote as this chance could possibly be, it creates psychological exhilaration. Researchers believe that intense excitement can release chemicals called "endorphins" produced in the body which have an effect like a pain-killing drug. This thrill or "emotional high" keeps the gambler coming back time after time, even if he continually loses. In our society today, we see support groups existing to help millions of citizens addicted to gambling. Gamblers often destroy their homes, marriages, and livelihoods. Our study of drug abuse takes a closer look at addiction, but it should be sufficient for now to say that a lack of self-control is at the heart of addiction, and God's word requires us to have self control. This destructive cycle is generated by nothing more than desires of the flesh, but it can be broken by pursuing spiritual things. Consider these passages:

2 Timothy 3:2-4

1 Corinthians 6:12

Gambling is diametrically opposed to contentment. Many addicts end up stealing or embezzling to pay their debts or support their habit. As discontentment leads to misery, some gambling addicts will eventually turn to drunkenness to try to find contentment or even commit suicide. Law enforcement authorities frequently report murders in connection with gambling debts. No matter how you sell it, gambling is not in the best interest of our society.

1 Timothy 6:10

The best way to avoid an addiction is to never begin the addictive practice in the first place. Someone may argue "I can control it; I won't let it get out of hand." Every addict thinks this at first; no gambling addict ever started out seriously thinking, "I will probably be miserably addicted to this someday." Besides, even if you are able to keep it from getting out of control, your participation may encourage others to gamble who may not have the same self-control. Then, you are guilty of leading them into sin, and your influence for good is lost.

5. Stewardship

Gambling also touches the issue of stewardship of the resources God has given us. God has provided us with gifts, talents, and resources, which are to be used by us for the furtherance of his kingdom. If we needlessly and arbitrarily place these gifts at risk for mere entertainment or for additional gain, we are not being good stewards. Luke 15:11 begins the story of the prodigal son who is condemned for wasting his goods on riotous living.

1 Corinthians 4:2

C. The Works Of The Flesh

So then, where does gambling fit in the life of a faithful Christian; is it a fruit of the Spirit or a work of the flesh?

Galatians 5:19; Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Of the sins listed, the honest Bible student will immediately recognize the connection between many of these and gambling:

- Idolatry [EIDOLOLATRIA] - avarice, as a worship of Mammon (J. H. Thayer).
- Jealousies [ZELOS] - ardor in embracing, pursuing, defending anything ... the fierceness of indignation ... contentious rivalry (J. H. Thayer).
- Selfish ambitions [ERITHEIA] - a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and fractious spirit which does not disdain low arts (J. H. Thayer); ambition, self-seeking, rivalry, and self-will (W. E. Vine).

- Envy [PHTHONOS] – the desire to deprive another of what he has (W. E. Vine).

These are the characteristics of gambling.

D. Principles in Review

We have examined the Bible principles at play in gambling. Though the Bible nowhere says "you shall not gamble," we have found gambling to be contrary the scriptural principles of contentment, selflessness, honesty, industriousness, self-control, influence, stewardship, and spirituality. Many of the gambler's traits are described in this scripture:

2 Timothy 3:2-4

Let's be certain of one thing: if gambling violates divine principles, it is sin. The faithful Christian will not engage in it or give approval of those that do (Romans 1:29-32).

E. Applications

Let's look now at applying these principles to daily life.

1. What about moderation?

Someone may argue that there is nothing wrong with gambling in insignificant amounts. They may reason that \$20 once a year is nothing to them, and losing it in gambling is no different from spending \$20 on some frivolous knickknack for their house. However, to someone else, that \$20 may be significant: it might put several needed meals on their family's table. So who's to say how little is small enough? We have demonstrated so far that gambling stands in violation of God's will on the basis of divine principles; it is a matter principle, not proportion. Gambling comes in many forms, and the faithful Christian will keep his distance from every one of them.

1 Thessalonians 5:22

2. What about "social gambling?"

Satan offers the temptation to engage in gambling in insidious ways. At some workplaces, "office pools" are frequently arranged. The wager can be over anything from a ball game to guessing a newborn baby's weight. Typically, everyone is asked to put in just a dollar or two, and whoever wins the draw gets the pot. They will often pressure you to participate, because, of course, the more that does, the bigger the pot.

Another similar thing frequently happens with a foursome on the golf course. Before beginning, they all arbitrarily agree that the loser will buy all of them drinks at the end. It may not be obvious, but this fits all the elements of gambling. Essentially, they have each agreed to put up the amount of money required to buy all the drinks. (In most gambling games, only one or just a few people win; the majority of the players lose. However, in this case, the agreed rule is that three of them win and only one loses.) The winners get their money back plus a free drink; the loser loses the value of three drinks (he enjoys the one he buys for himself). They may not lay their money on the table or verbalize all this, but all three elements are there: (1) the deliberate hazarding of a thing of value to be gained or lost, (2) an arbitrary chance event (the game is the wager, not the golf), and (3) the winners' profits come from the losses of another. That's gambling. A gambling addict and former NBA referee confessed that wagering on the golf course was his starting point. Our tendency may be just to go along in order to get along, but if we do so, we violate divine principles.

1 Peter 4:3-5

3. What about worthy causes?

Satan really gets crafty here. Sometimes, raffles are held. In these, there are often two winners: one a game player and one not. The winner who is not a game player is typically some group of needy people, and they usually never know how the money is actually raised. The players might all be asked to buy a ticket for \$10. Depending on how many players they can recruit, they might award \$1000 to the charity and \$1000 to some "lucky winner." This fits the gambling definition and is thus an ungodly practice. No amount of good accomplished by it can validate the method.

This becomes even more insidious when the worthy cause is a religious organization, especially when the largest denomination in the world claiming to worship Jesus Christ practices this. In fact, the word "bingo" could almost become a synonym for the institution. We may ask what could be wrong with gambling when many religious leaders sanction it. However, remember that the traditions of man-made religion are not our standard for authority.

The same principle holds true for a pledge. What if you make a promise to God that if you win the lottery, you'll give half your winnings to the church? Think of how much good work could be done for the Lord with millions of dollars in the treasury! Let's not deceive ourselves; the end does not justify the means.

It's sad that some people must be motivated to give by catering to their "what's-in-it-for-me" attitude. If you wish to give money to a worthy cause, just give the money without a desire for anything in return.

Luke 6:35

We may be tempted to argue, "What difference does it make whether I give this way or that? What does it hurt to give with the chance of getting something in return?" The difference is: these actions are in violation of divine principles.

4. What about using other people's money?

Consent = Participation

2 Corinthians 5:11-17

5. What about playing games without wagering?

Virtually any random event or game can be wagered upon. Any sport from ping pong to polo can be a gambling vehicle. Certain games, however, have become particularly connected with gambling by the frequent association. These games include billiards, cards (especially poker), and horse racing. Apart from wagering, there's nothing in these activities inherently contrary to godly principles. It is the wagering that is wrong; the gamble is not in the game itself.

1 Timothy 4:8

1 Corinthians 9:24, 25

F. Conclusion

We have demonstrated that gambling is a violation of clear godly principles. Let's be certain of one thing: if gambling violates divine principles, it is sin. The faithful Christian will not engage in it or give approval of those that do (Romans 1:29-32). In Philippians 4:8, the inspired apostle makes a representative list of noble things. Gambling qualifies for none of them.

G. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. What three elements must be involved for an activity to be gambling according to this discussion?
2. Explain in your own words the significant difference between taking a risk and gambling.
3. What is the meaning of "stewardship?"
4. List the three legitimate modes of income revealed in scripture.
5. What is wrong with playing "the loser pays" game?
6. Can you think of any circumstance or condition where gambling as described would be acceptable conduct?

IV. Prejudice

A. What Is James Talking About?

James 2: 1 - 9

¹ My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. ² For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, ³ and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," ⁴ have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? ⁶ But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? ⁷ Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? ⁸ If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; ⁹ but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

1. Respect of persons

In Romans 2:11 we read:

*For there is no **partiality** with God.*

The King James version uses the phrase "respect of persons." This phrase is translated from only one word in the original language [PROSOPOLEMPTES] which literally means "to take face." It is properly rendered "partiality," and it suggests the conclusion we draw, not from the facts about a person, but from our supposition of who the person is. To illustrate this a little better, many times a teacher who is trying to be fair, who is trying to guard against "respect of persons" while grading tests, will block out the name of the student until the grading is done. In this way, they assure that the grade awarded is based on what the student had done, not who did it. A symbol of fairness in civil judgment we sometimes see today is a blindfolded individual holding scales. The idea is that judgment is made on the basis of facts without looking at how things may appear at face value.

2. Prejudice

In 1 Timothy 5:21 we read:

*I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without **prejudice**, doing nothing with **partiality**."*

J. H. Thayer defines the word here translated "prejudice" [PROKRIMA] as "an opinion formed before the facts are known." Similarly, Vine's Expository Dictionary defines this word as "pre-judging, preferring one person, another being put aside, by unfavorable judgment due to partiality."

This is talking about making judgments of others before we've taken the time to truly get to know them. It also involves our action of excluding or shunning the people we so judge. The English word "prejudice" in the noun form (or "prejudging" as a verb) comes from the prefix "pre," meaning "before", and the root "judicium" means "judgment." Webster defines it as "an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics."

3. Partiality

Again in 1 Timothy 5:21, Vine's Expository Dictionary states that the word here translated "partiality" [PROSKLISIS] "denotes inclination." J. H. Thayer defines the word as "an inclination or proclivity of mind, a joining the party of one." Therefore, this involves not only the exclusion of those we presume objectionable but also the formation of cliques, parties, or groups which would exclude them. This spirit of partiality will cause us to classify people in terms of the groups we see them in. We then assume all individuals in the group behave the way most in the group do instead of judging them on their own merits.

So, to summarize, "respect of persons," "partiality," or "prejudice" is a judgment about people merely because of their status, situation, or other outward characteristic and our exclusion or avoidance of them based upon the same.

B. What Is James Not Talking About?

Prejudice, as we have established, is the formation of an unfair opinion about someone without knowing all the facts, without understanding their situation, or by assuming they are like their peers. Prejudice is not to be confused with a fair assessment we make on the basis of a thorough investigation, inquiry, and observation. The scriptures instruct us

to make these judgments about others. We are told we can know people by their fruits and that we should shun Christians who walk disorderly. This is righteous judging, not pre-judging. Consider these verses:

Matthew 7:15-21 ...by their fruits you will know them...

Matthew 18:15-18 ...every word may be established...

John 7:24 ...judge with righteous judgment

Romans 16:15 ...note those who cause divisions...and avoid them...

Moreover, prejudice, as we will see, is typically based on appearances and situations people have no control over. For example, people are often prejudged by their race, though they had no choice about this when they were born. This is different from someone who dresses like a slob by choice when they can do better. This actually involves a different kind of immoral behavior which will be discussed in a separate lesson.

Additionally, we are not talking about having special friends in our relationships. We may naturally be drawn to certain people because of similar likes and dislikes and become especially close to them. Jesus had such special people in his life: John, Peter, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. However, this does not mean we have disregard for others.

C. The Basis Of Prejudice

Prejudice (pre-judgment) can be based on any number of different personal characteristics. We will examine some of these.

1. On the basis of financial status

This is the specific area James was talking about. How might this be demonstrated in your lives, and can you think of any times when you have seen prejudice on the basis on how much a person had or didn't have?

Zacheus Luke 19

2. On the basis of appearance

At this point, we are not talking about race; we are talking about someone who just looks a little different. Maybe they are scarred, have a physical deformity, or are handicapped. Maybe they simply have some unusual mannerism that sets them apart. We have all known someone who may have been a little bit different, may have looked a little bit different or acted a little differently than others. And we have all heard the jokes about those people. Parents sometimes unwittingly give their children terrible examples by cruelly ridiculing the appearance of another person, or making fun of the way a person walks or talks. Most of the time parents will do it out of earshot of the person they are ridiculing, but sometimes children don't bother with that. The result is that a vicious remark, maybe even made in a joking manner, is thrust into the heart of the innocent person being ridiculed, and they are deeply hurt.

To illustrate, there was a group of adults standing around after Sunday morning worship services, just talking in the back, and they began to discuss the new preacher's wife. They didn't pay any attention to the fact that their little kids were standing around, too. At any rate, one lady said, "Well, she's not ugly, but she's not a bit pretty either." Sure enough, that night at evening services the first thing one little boy did who had heard what was said was to go up to the preacher's wife and say, "So-and-so says you are not a bit pretty." We cannot base our decisions about another human being on their physical appearance.

3. On the basis of intelligence

Does how smart a person is affect how we view their worth? Do we look down on people that we don't think are as smart as we are, feel that they are "dumb" and in some sense inferior because of their lack of intellectual attainment?

Romans 12:16

4. On the basis of gender

Many people today have the prejudice that women aren't as good as men, or men aren't as good as women. Though there are often notable emotional differences between men and women and their God-ordained roles are different, men and women are on equal standing before God. Consider the admonition in 1 Peter 3:7 where we are both "heirs together of the grace of life."

5. On the basis of age

Paul tells Timothy, "Let no one despise your youth" (1 Timothy 4:12). Certainly, there are times, especially among children, when the older do not get along that well with the younger. Young Christians need to work at getting through

those difficult times. Therefore, the exclusive attitude of upper classmen in school against lower classmen should not characterize the young child of God.

6. On the basis of nationality

The apostle Paul instructed Titus to combat national prejudice in the church where he was a preacher:

Titus 1:10-13

In verse 11 he states that some people were saying things they ought not be saying. In verse 12 he gives an example of such: "Cretans are always liars..." Even if most of the people of Crete were liars, it was unfair to assess that all Cretans were so. This is prejudice, and in verse 13 he instructs Titus to deliver a sharp rebuke.

7. On the basis of religion

Some groups hate Catholics, others hate Jews, still others hate Muslims and on and on it goes. It is wrong to view others with contempt just because of what they believe. (Understand that we can and should hate every false way, but not the people themselves.)

John 4:7-24

In this passage, a beautiful story is told how Jesus broke down the prejudicial barriers in His society of not only gender and nationality but also religion as He spoke openly to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

8. On the basis of race

Racial prejudice is not something new, it has been around for a very long time and it did not begin with the white and black issue in the United States. No greater example of prejudice can be found than the prejudice that existed between the Jew and the Gentile in the time of our Lord. It has existed for some 1500 years. The Jews considered the Gentiles as heathens and base barbarians. They were considered filthy and unclean.

Peter was a man who had been born and schooled as a Jew. He also had this Jewish prejudice toward all Gentiles. In fact, so strong was it that the Holy Spirit gave Peter a direct vision, not once but three times, ordering him to enter the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion of Caesarea and a Gentile.

Acts 10:9-20

Look now at Acts 10:34, 35. The conclusion was so clear and so simple: "God is not a respecter of persons." To even further support Peter's conclusion, look at verses 44-48 to see what took place.

So strong was the racial prejudice of the Jews that when Peter went back to his fellow Jewish Christians, they said, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" (Acts 11:3). In their eyes, that was a terrible thing to do. However, Peter rehearsed the whole event for them, told them how he had six witnesses with him, and how he had arrived at the conclusion that he did. God does not judge a man according to his race, color, or nationality, and Peter learned that we better not do it either.

You would think that that should have been the end of it, but it wasn't.

Galatians 2:11-14

Some time later, Peter had been eating with the Gentiles. When some Jews came, Peter withdrew himself from the Gentiles, causing other Jewish Christians to do the same. The reason Peter did this was because he feared that some of the Jews who had come would not accept his actions because of their prejudice against Gentiles. Paul stated that Peter was to be blamed, and he rebuked him. Peter had sinned. He withdrew his company because of racial prejudice and in so doing he was wrong.

Many Christians still have not learned this lesson. Prejudice was a sin then and it is a sin now. Today we pray fervently for the cause of Christ, sing loudly of the love of God, and you can still occasionally hear Christians making comments that indicate that they still view a particular race of people with prejudice, prejudging them just because of their skin color.

We must not be deceived. God condemns racial prejudice of any kind. It is even more disturbing and distasteful among Christians. If anybody should know better, we should. Consider the principles taught in these verses:

1 Timothy 2:6

What does this verse teach us? It tells us that Christ died for all men the same.

Matthew 28:18-20

What does this passage tell us? The gospel is to be taken into all the world, regardless of race, color, or nationality.

Galatians 3:26-28

What does it say? It says that we are all the same in the eyes of God: Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female. This is truly one of the marvelous things about Christianity. God doesn't care what color we are, what race we are, or what nationality we are, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. It is so marvelous to think that when men become reconciled to God, they are also reconciled to one another with no room for prejudices of any kind.

D. The Manifestations Of Prejudice

Prejudice (pre-judgment) manifests itself when we take action on the suppositions we've made about others. This occurs in basically two different ways. The first way is by excluding those we have unfairly prejudged to be disdainful. As has already been noted, excluding others socially because they are tall, short, skinny, overweight, fair-skinned, dark skinned, diseased, or because they look different, talk different, or dress different is wrong. Forming special social groups to exclude those considered unworthy on these grounds is showing partiality, and it's immoral. A Christian will look at the inner man and judge the heart, not appearances (1 Samuel 16:7).

The second way prejudice is manifested is by preferring those we have prejudged to be respectable. This is the other side of prejudice. Instead of negative feelings, unjustifiable positive feelings motivate us to show partiality. For instance, here's a person who is wealthy, wears nice clothes and drives a nice car – he or she must be okay. Here's another person who is good looking and popular – he or she must be alright. Here's a person who gets straight A's, is an honor student, and has colleges lining up to have them come – they must be the kind of person I want to be around. All these are examples of pre-judgments based solely on externals; they are examples of "respect of persons." Though they are positively demonstrated, they are wrong just as are the negative demonstrations.

E. What To Do About It

Understand first that respect of persons (prejudice) is sin. Remember James 2:8-10, "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all."

Here are some safeguards against prejudice:

1. Love

Remember to practice brotherly love. The apostle John has much to say about love in his epistles. Reading especially 1 John 4, we learn that to love God, we absolutely must not hold any ill will toward our fellow man. Love and prejudice cannot abide together in the same heart.

Romans 12:9, 10

1 Thessalonians 4:6-10

Hebrews 13:1

2. Determine to judge according to facts and not appearance

Jesus said:

John 7:24, Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Respect of persons is a sin that is learned, children learn it from their parents and from other children. It is also true that judging righteous judgments must be learned as well.

Get to know people personally before forming an opinion about them. Appearances can be deceiving. This was the mistake Eli made about Hannah, the mother of Samuel:

1 Samuel 1:13

Pay no attention to what people say about other people, but talk directly to them instead. Ask them what they think; then your assessment of them will be on the basis of fact, not hearsay.

3. Have a proper evaluation of self

Paul writes:

Romans 12:3, For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

He also spoke of a mistake that people make: of measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves (2 Corinthians 10:12). The verdict is that those people are not wise. In other words, if we can see ourselves and others as we and they really are, then we will neither unduly adore nor maliciously defame anyone.

4. Recognize the kinship of man

Since all of us are created in the image of God, and all of us have common parents in Adam and Eve, we really have no reason to look down on, or up at, any one.

Acts 17:24-28

5. Be considerate

Matthew. 7:12, Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

If I desire to be treated with dignity by all, regardless of my wealth or poverty, regardless of whether I am well known or unknown, whether I am a member of a majority race or minority race, whether I am perfectly formed physically or have a defect of some kind, then I must certainly treat all others the same way.

F. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. What is the origin of our English word, "prejudice?"
2. Explain in your own words the difference between making proper judgments and improper judgments about other people.
3. Can you think of a specific incident where you were treated with prejudice? Briefly describe your feeling.
4. Human wisdom declares that both homosexuals and people of other races alike ought not be considered differently. Review 1 Corinthians 15:33 and explain the difference. Is it wrong to exclude others from your personal activities because of their sinful behavior? Is it wrong to exclude others from your personal activities because of their skin color?
5. What does it mean to be created in the image of God? What does that suggest about our fellow man?
6. Read Matthew 7:12. Does it mean "However you do not want people to treat you, do not treat them?" Explain the difference.

V. Bad Language

A. The Character Of Our Speech

What should be the characteristics of our speech?

Colossians 4:6

- Grace, meaning favorable, pleasant, dignified
- Seasoned with salt

Seasoned [ARTUO] means to arrange, make ready. Hence, think before you speak.

Salt makes food more palatable, and is used as a preservative for meats. Thus, speech free of corruption.

Titus 2:8

1 Timothy 6:3

- Sound [HUGIES] (from whence, "hygiene") means healthy.
- Controlled, mastery of our bodies

James 3:2-4

1 Corinthians 6:12, 13

The purpose of this study is to examine various speech forms unbecoming Christians. A word of clarification is made at the outset. This study deals candidly with words that are commonly used in an ugly way. As the lesson progresses, the discussion of these words and examples cited are not intended to offend but instruct. As much discretion as possible is used, but if the matter is not clearly stated, the student will end up wondering exactly what kind of language is wrong.

B. Abusing God's Name

1. Old Testament Attitudes

Exodus 20:7 ...not take God's name in vain...

Psalms 111:9 ...holy and reverend is Thy name...

Out of respect, one of the Hebrew's words for God, YHWH, was never pronounced.

2. New Testament Application

Matthew 6:9 ...hallowed be Thy name...

The rich who slander the holy name:

James 2:7

Many people today throw the name of God around like a by-word or an idle exclamation. We should speak God's name only when we are talking about Him in reverence or to Him in prayer.

C. Cursing And Swearing

1. The Curse

Note Peter's language in his denial. This was apparently something he was not accustomed to doing.

Mark 14:71

Curse means devoted to destruction [ANATHEMA].

Galatians 1:8,9

James 3:2-12

Consider the irony of blessing God and cursing men with the same lips (verses 8 - 10). God compels us to love our enemies. A faithful Christian would never wish damnation in hell upon his worst enemies; he would not even say it in jest.

Matthew 5:44

2. Flippant Use Of The Word "Hell"

Some have no fear of hell or what it means to go there for eternity. Hell is real, and it is sobering and horrifying to think of such a terrible place. We need to take it seriously. It is therefore not a word for us to throw around mindlessly for emphasis or an interjection. See the New Testament description of hell:

Mark 9:42-50

Perhaps it's best to use the word "hell" only when we're actually talking to someone about the place of eternal punishment and the need to avoid going there (or when we're talking about not saying it).

3. Idle Oaths

Swear not by moon and stars, swear to God solemnly, as in marriage vows, not frivolously or void of substance.

Matthew 5:33-37

James 5:12

An oath is essentially the same thing as a vow, as at a wedding; it's effectively the noun form of "to swear." Some have suggested these passages teach that a Christian should never make any oath for any reason. However, God himself made oaths:

Hebrews 6:16-18

The point is that we need to think seriously about the words we say and be true to our words, whether we seal them with an oath or not. Nevertheless, if someone believes they should not "solemnly swear to tell the whole truth so help them God," then it would be sin for them to so speak, violating their conscience. There are other ways of saying, "God as my witness, I am telling the truth." On the other hand, if we are constantly swearing to God or anyone or anything else for the truthfulness of what we're saying, it becomes trivial. This was the point Jesus was making.

D. Vulgarity, Filth, And Profanity

1. What defiles?

Matthew 15:11, 17-20

Mark 7:15-23

2. What not to say

- Unwholesome words:

Ephesians 4:29

Positively stated, this means not just non-healthy, but rotten and putrid, as dead bodies were "unclean" under Moses' Law.

- Filthiness, foolish talking, and dirty jokes:

Ephesians 5:3,4

"Let it not even be named among you" suggests not so much as even making mention. There should not be even a hint of making sex and the body a dirty thing; such is unfitting of Christians.

- Shameful speech:

Ephesians 5:11, 12

These things are not a source of humor. Abstaining from sexual immorality (2 Thessalonians 4:3) means we also don't talk about sexuality in a perverted way.

Curse words and the name of God are words acceptably uttered in the proper context, for example, when appropriately discussing the judgment of the Lord. Vulgar language, however, has a certain vocabulary all its own; there is never a proper situation for these words to ever come out of our mouth.

- Obscenities:

Colossians 3:8

Put aside abusive speech, which includes all things repulsive and disgusting to the senses. Unseemly body parts, bodily functions, and waste material should not be spoken of out of proper context.

- Profanities:

1 Timothy 1:9

The verb form of profane means to take that which is special and make it common, to make the holy debased, and to make the beautiful ugly.

E. Offensive Words

Some words formerly not considered offensive are considered unfitting today by reason of common understanding. To illustrate, the King James Bible was translated in 1611. Since then, some words have changed from inoffensive to offensive by reason of their abuse. Several instances are found in the King James rendering of the following verses. For discretion, the modern, inoffensive word is shown below:

Hebrews 12:8 KJV ("illegitimate")

1 Kings 14:10 KJV ("urinate")

We must watch how we use our liberties. We should not think we can use these words freely in our speech today just because they appear in the King James Bible. Besides, those words at that time were used in proper context, not in a perverted way. Consider these points:

- Give no offense.

1 Corinthians 8:7, 9-13; 10:32

Our words should not mislead and encourage others to sin.

- Be an example.

Titus 2:7

If you use words that are marginally acceptable, others will be influenced by you to cross the line.

- Use good judgment.

Proverbs 25:11

F. Euphemisms

A euphemism is a word of lesser offense, typically accepted by society, substituted for a word of greater offense.

What matters most is that which we are actually saying. The primary concern is not what words in particular we are using but the message we are conveying. If the meaning is the same as if we had used the word of greater offense, we might as well have used the bad word.

Euphemisms appear in various forms and cover virtually all types of bad language as outlined above. Some examples follow:

1. Variations and sound-alikes

- God's name: gee, geez, gosh, golly
- Curses: heck, dang, darn, dog-gone-it

Webster's English dictionary defines these words to be such substitutes.

- Vulgar: shoot, freaking

Sometimes the substitute word sounds so much like the overtly offensive one that a person is misunderstood to actually use it. Think about what this does to your influence.

2. Foreign words

God knows what is being said.

3. Spelling or first letters (acronyms)

- Offensive: S.O.B.
- Irreverence: O.M.G.

4. Omitted words

A common innocent example expression is to say, "What in the world is going on?" An offensive expression occurs when "hell" is substituted for "world," and we have already discussed the problem with a flippant use of the word "hell." A common variation is to substitute a vulgarity. We will hear these expressions often in our workplaces or in school. However, to create a euphemism, the speaker simply omits the offensive word, saying, "What the ...?" or by utilizing an acronym, thereby thinking he has said nothing foul or shameful. If others hear us speak like this, they will unavoidably insert the missing offensive word in their mind, and we have put it there.

5. Gestures

A gesture can be considered a euphemism where a symbol is substituted for an ugly word. (Foreign gestures follow the same rule). If the word is unfit for a Christian to use, so is the gesture that means the same thing.

A founding principle to be first learned about morals is avoidance:

1 Thessalonians 5:22

The word here translated "abstain" means to hold off from, to have had enough of. The word for "appearance" means that which meets the eye, the shape, form, and fashion of a thing. Foul language is another evil to be avoided. Euphemisms are a way of getting as close as possible to using foul language without actually uttering the offensive word. The faithful Christian will avoid it.

G. Innuendo

Merriam-Webster defines innuendo as "an oblique allusion: hint, insinuation; especially: a veiled or equivocal reflection on character or reputation." In other words, an indirect, obscure, devious, or underhanded statement often utilizing the ambiguity of multiple word definitions to suggest a hidden meaning different from what is obviously stated. An example of this occurs very early in the history of human language when Adam insinuates that his sin is partly God's fault because of the woman He gave him (Genesis 3:12).

A "pun" involves a usually humorous play on sound-alike words or phrases, but innuendo based on multiple word meanings is called "double entendre." An example occurs in John 3:3 where Jesus says, "You must be born again." The word "again" translates ANOTHEN {an'-o-then} which has a double meaning: "from above" (James 3:17) or "over again" (Galatians 4:9). Nicodemus, being carnally minded, does not take the heavenly meaning.

This is all quite innocent, until in conversation this figure of speech suggests something lewd or inappropriate, as in sexual innuendo. For example, years ago the phrase "coming out of the closet" indicated someone who has openly declared that they are practicing homosexuality. In an incidental conversation, someone might use this phrase in its literal sense, but then someone makes a joke about the suggested allusion to practicing homosexuality. The practice of homosexuality is sin (covered in a different section in this study series) and will subject a person to the judgment and condemnation of the Lord. This is not something to make jokes about.

When it indeed happens unintentionally, a wholesome response would be to add clarification to avoid a misunderstanding. However, a faithful Christian professing godliness will not engage in such talk when the immoral or vulgar insinuation is intended.

H. Corrective Action

James 1:26

How do we make correction? Speech is easily a thing we do out of habit and without thought. Given this, it is easy to develop improper speech patterns, especially when the world sees nothing wrong with filthy talk or euphemisms. God, however, expects certain behavior from His followers.

1. Take responsibility

You may have improper speech and not be aware of it because it's a thoughtless habit. Make the effort to listen to yourself objectively and compare your language with the biblical principles shown here. Develop new habits where necessary. It may be a struggle at first, but the more you do it, the easier it gets.

Allow yourself no excuses. We often hear people say, "excuse my French" after using foul language. This is nothing more than a lame apology for a lack of self control. We all need a verbal "vent" sometimes, an exclamation, or an expletive. Find wholesome substitutes suitable for a Christian's tongue.

2. Increase knowledge

Increasing knowledge increases awareness. Apply what is learned from this study to your speech. Take the matter seriously.

3. Make the heart pure

What comes out of the mouth is an expression of what is inside the heart. If the heart is full of only that which is pure, nothing evil even has a chance of coming out.

Matthew 12:33-37

The word translated "idle" [ARGOS] means useless, inactive, barren, fruitless, words that do nothing (hence the inert gas, argon). Remember that as we may use idle words, we will have to give an account of whether they are harmless or condemning.

4. Don't laugh at dirty jokes

Laughing shows approval; approval is consent; consent is guilt. We all want to be liked by others and "fit in." Do not deceive yourself into thinking you can just go along passively participating in such a thing. Though the joke may not come out of your mouth, you share the guilt.

5. Choose carefully your associates

Better yet, try to avoid even hearing dirty jokes in the first place. The bad speech habits of others are easily adopted by us if we hear them constantly. When you can, modify your environment to lessen your exposure to foul language; separate yourselves.

I. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. Why is using the word "God" for mere emphasis in our speech wrong?
2. When is it wrong for a Christian to swear or make an oath?
3. Should a man's speech when he is around only men be any different from when he is around women and children?
4. Does a crisis or disaster ever justify using bad language?
5. Do certain occupations or situations justify using foul speech?
6. What is the real difference between using the word "God" and "gosh" as an expletive in a sentence?
7. What is the real difference between using the word "hell" and "heck" as a curse in a sentence?
8. How can you know if your language is acceptable to God?

VI. Smoking

Tobacco products are widely used in our society today, for example, in cigars, in pipes, in chew, and most commonly, in cigarettes. The discussion that follows is applicable to all such uses of tobacco, but smoking is the central topic, since it is so prevalent.

This lesson examines the use of tobacco. Is smoking an activity in which the faithful Christians should be engaged? As with all our lessons on morality, we will investigate what the Bible says about it and live by that standard.

A. Smoking Is Dirty

Smoking is one of the nastiest, filthiest habits that anyone can develop.

1. It produces undesirable effects on the body

- bad breath
- stinking clothing
- stained teeth
- discolored skin

2. It produces undesirable effects on the surroundings

- house fires
- burns on furniture
- irritating air
- flying ash and piles
- a smelly home or office

The Bible instructs us to put away filthiness. The adage, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," is not far from scriptural principles.

2 Corinthians 7:1

James 1:21

B. Smoking Harms The Physical Body

Cigarette smoking is the main cause of many diseases. Someone may argue, "My body is mine to do with it as I please; if I do harm to my body, it is no body's business but my own." This is arrogance and selfishness. Actually, our bodies are not our own; our bodies are a gift from our creator. We are but stewards of that gift. Smoking is not the way to "glorify God in your body."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

It's no wonder that smoking causes disease: it's poisonous. Cigarette smoke contains nicotine, and nicotine is a poison. Look up the word "nicotine" in any dictionary and see what it says. Moreover, research has determined that cigarette smoke contains additionally about 12 different deadly gases, among them are carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, and nitrogen oxides.

As long as we are alive on this earth, God expects us to serve Him and teach others to do His will. If we bring upon ourselves a needless, early demise, we have robbed God of our time to be effective for His causes.

Philippians 1:22-26

Let's consider some diseases with known links to smoking.

1. It is the number-one cause of lung cancer

The chances of dying from lung cancer was statistically studied by the American Medical Association. Here's what they found:

- If you smoke, your chances of dying from lung cancer are 1 in 148.
- An ex-smoker's chances are 1 in 946.

- A non-smoker's risks are only 1 in 16,238.

2. Emphysema is much more easily contracted

Emphysema, an incurable breathing disorder, is characterized by an inefficiency in the lungs to exchange oxygen and carbon dioxide with the blood. Over time in susceptible people, lung infections or irritations can cause a blockage of airways in the lungs. These blockages trap air in the lung, causing the blood vessels in the affected area to disappear. Less contact between air and blood is the result. More lung irritations result in further damage until breathing is impaired. This disease can obviously kill.

Smoking provides the perfect irritation of lung tissue for this disease. Statistics show the disease occurring in smokers 2000% more than in non-smokers!

3. It increases the risk of heart problems and chronic bronchitis

Here is the American Heart Association's Scientific Position:

"Cigarette smoking is the most important preventable cause of premature death in the United States. It accounts for more than 440,000 of the more than 2.4 million annual deaths. Cigarette smokers have a higher risk of developing a number of chronic disorders. These include fatty buildups in arteries, several types of cancer and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (lung problems). Atherosclerosis (clogged arteries) is the chief contributor to the high number of deaths from smoking. Many studies detail the evidence that cigarette smoking is a major cause of coronary heart disease, which leads to heart attack."

C. Smoking Is Addictive

Smoking is clearly a bad habit. However, more than just a bad habit; it is an addiction. In fact, it is one of the strongest and cruelest addictions known to man.

1. What is addiction?

There is a distinction that must be made between habit and addiction. Habits may be good ones or they may be bad ones, but there are no good addictions. We may have the habit of locking our car door when we leave it or flossing our teeth at bedtime, but that does not mean we are addicted to those things. Addiction, on the other hand, involves physical dependence. The addicting substance is actually known to alter the body chemistry. Once this occurs, it becomes as much a bodily illness as anything else.

Smoking addiction is so strong, it has been found to have a life-long effect. Even if you beat the habit and quit smoking, the desire is still chemically programmed in your body. The temptation to smoke again is much greater than the temptation for someone who has never smoked. There are actually 3 kinds of people: smokers, ex-smokers, and non-smokers. Ex-smokers will never be non-smokers again.

The same things can be said of addiction to other substances, like alcohol. Drinking is specifically examined in another lesson, but the effects of alcohol are a little different from nicotine. It is quite possible to casually drink alcohol and not immediately become chemically dependent to it. However, almost no one uses tobacco casually; they are typically always addicted.

2. Self-control

Self-control is compromised in all addiction, and that is always wrong. The scriptures are filled with admonitions regarding mastery of our own bodies.

Romans 6:12-13, 16

1 Corinthians 9:27

Lack of self-control is at the heart of smoking problem; Christians are to exhibit self-control.

Galatians 5:22-23

2 Peter 1:6

Even if a thing is right in and of itself, we are not to be under the control of it.

1 Corinthians 6:12

We are put into bondage by whatever we are overcome. If we are overcome by corruption, we are slaves of corruption.

2 Peter 2:19

3. How does it start?

The best way to avoid addiction is to never start in the first place. This is little comfort for those held in its grip, but for those who are not, heed the warning! Here are some of the main reasons people start smoking.

- Peer pressure

Many smokers today are young people who are most easily influenced by others. When those you go to school with or work with see you as different because you do not smoke, you may be tempted to join in to feel included.

Proverbs 1:7-10

The idea that smoking will make you look mature is a falsehood. Conversely, maturity and conviction are required to take a stand against it.

- Parental examples

Unfortunately, some children grow up seeing their parents smoke. They may learn from this one way or the other, but in any case, it would be better if children could learn from the proper example.

- Curiosity

Curiosity can fuel creativity and invention, but unchanneled, it can lead astray.

Proverbs 5:22, 23

4. No Excuse

Simply because smoking is physically addicting does not excuse the activity, and addiction is not a valid reason to not quit. Before the smoker became addicted, he made the free choice to smoke the first one; no one held a gun to his head. Besides, he must have been living in a cave for the past four decades to have never heard about the dangers of smoking. We have only ourselves to blame for a self-inflicted ailment. Righteous living is easy, but choosing a life of sin is a hard life to live.

Proverbs 13:15

It is possible to bring any addiction under control, though it may require great effort. Moreover, as nicotine is a drug, it may be possible to obtain aid in breaking the habit with other drugs legitimately developed for this purpose.

5. Financial strain

Not only can smoking rob our time but also our money. Reports indicate that in 1999, the total cost in the United States of healthcare and loss of productivity for smoking was \$100 billion. But what about for the cigarettes themselves? Let's do a little math.

Assume that a pack of cigarettes costs \$2.50 and you smoke a pack a day. That's \$76 per month or \$912 per year. Over 20 years that would be \$18,240 and even more if interest on investment were included. Granted, we may spend money on many frivolous things for amusement or entertainment, but when the money goes literally "up in smoke" it's worthwhile to think about the productive things that could have been done instead. Ironically, you will see people buying groceries with government food stamps, yet cigarettes are in their cart. That's because of addiction.

D. Smoking Affects Others

1. It Damages Your Influence

Matthew 5:16

Philippians 2:14-16

Do you think it would be easy to convert someone to Christ while smoking a cigarette? Will smoking impress them with your spirituality? Will they see your devotion to God in this practice?

1 Corinthians 10:31-33

1 Peter 2:11-12

Would you recommend the practice to others? Would you want your own children to smoke?

Smoking is not Christlikeness. Can you picture Jesus smoking as He preached the sermon on the mount, smoking as He performed His miracles of healing, or asking for one last cigarette as He hung on the cross?

Smoking is drug abuse; the drug is nicotine. Every point made in lessons on drug abuse can be rightly applied to smoking. This is covered in greater detail in another lesson.

2. Pollution

Recent studies have just begun to show the effect of what we now call "second hand smoke." If you smoke, whoever you are with while you do it has to endure it, whether they also are smokers or not. It is essentially rude and inconsiderate.

Matthew 7:12

On a grander scale, the millions of people who smoke needlessly contribute to the world's air pollution problem to a degree. Smoking has become prohibited in most zoos, museums, and botanical gardens for its adverse effect.

E. Smoking Is Sin

Know this: sin is a violation of God's law, and if smoking violates God's law concerning our bodies and self-control, it is sin. A distinguishing characteristic of Christians is to always objectively look to the Bible and call lawlessness sin without bias. This, however, is not a very popular sermon. For decades, smoking was accepted because the long-term effects were not yet known. We are no longer ignorant, yet the acceptance lingers, or at least toleration, perhaps out of patience or sympathy for those enslaved to it. We never hear today of anyone being disfellowshipped in the church because of smoking, but we do if they are drunkards or adulterers. Perhaps there are inconsistent practices in the church today as we are weak, fleshly creatures, but God's law is pure and changeless, and we'd better be teaching it.

F. Arguments To Justify Smoking

A large number of arguments are often heard in an attempt to justify smoking. An honest heart will recognize these arguments as poor excuses for ungodly behavior. Let's hear some of the arguments:

1. "Soda pop, coffee, overeating, and too much candy are just as harmful as smoking."

No they're not. There are no warning labels on soda pops or coffee. Besides, one abuse does not justify another. If I'm addicted to coffee or a glutton, that's wrong, too. A thing is determined to be right or wrong not by comparing it to other things but by comparing it to God's word.

2. "Mark 7:15 says that nothing which enters a man can defile him. That includes tobacco."

Read ahead in verses 17 through 23. Defilement is centered in the heart. Jesus teaches in verse 22 that out of the heart comes "foolishness," which defiles. W. E. Vine states that this word (in the adjective form) "signifies 'without reason,... want of mental sanity and sobriety, a reckless and inconsiderate habit of mind' (Hort), or 'the lack of commonsense perception of the reality of things natural and spiritual ... or the imprudent ordering of one's life in regard to salvation' (G. Vos, in Hastings' Bible Dic.)." That describes smoking. When a man purifies his heart, foolish behavior, like smoking, is not engaged.

3. "It's just as bad to work in a coal mine or a chemical company as it is to smoke."

Improvements are constantly being made to hazardous work environments as we learn more about the dangers. Nevertheless, as dangerous as some occupations are, safety is never disregarded as it is for smoking.

4. "The Bible doesn't say, 'Thou shalt not use tobacco.'"

An early premise in our study established that sinful practices do not have to be specifically mentioned in scripture for us to determine they are sinful in principle.

5. "All God's creation is good. For what use did God make tobacco if not for smoking?"

Perhaps for the production of pesticides.

6. "Romans 14:14 says, 'There is nothing unclean of itself.' That includes tobacco."

This is out of context. Romans 14 is talking about things that in themselves are not matters of right and wrong.

7. "We use medicines that are poisonous; smoking is no different than chemotherapy."

The therapeutic use of chemical substances in the body is not to be compared to their recreational use, that is, abuse.

8. "I enjoy it."

Some sins are admittedly enjoyable, for a season, but they are still sin. Self denial in our service to God requires that we not give ourselves over to every earthly pleasure (2 Peter 2:10).

9. "I'm not addicted; I smoke only in moderation. I therefore keep it under control, so it's okay."

We have established that smoking is sinful not only because of its addictive nature but also due to bodily harm and influence, which still results from smoking only in moderation. How much control a moderate smoker really has is doubtful, anyway; he may actually be mildly addicted in self-denial. Besides, addicted smokers always start out in moderation.

10. "I can afford it."

Though you might be able to manage the waste does not change the principle of squandering (Proverbs 21:20).

11. "Burning incense was a part of worship under the Old Testament, and the smoke pleased God (Revelation 8:3, 4)."

Not one time in the Bible is the word "smoke" used to refer to intentionally inhaling it for the effect as is done today.

12. "We all have to die eventually from something."

This is just plain silly, and anyone who says it knows it. Life is a precious gift from God. God expects us to do something good with our life (Gal 6:9, 10). That which shortens our life shortens the good we can do (Phil 1:23, 24).

G. Suggestions To Help People Quit Smoking

It is not easy to quit smoking. But it CAN be done. Others have done it, so can you, if you smoke. Here are some suggestions to help:

1. Admit that it is sin

Recognize that we can lose our souls over it. If we truly accept this, it will motivate us. The greatest trial or hardship life can give is not worth losing our soul over.

Hebrews 12:1-4

2. Convince yourself

Do not surrender yourself to accept that you tried but you just can't quit. God assures us that with every trial, He provides the way of escape. Look for it and find it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

3. Don't try to do it alone

Pray for God's help. Talk to other Christians who have gone through it.

James 5:16

Galatians 6:1, 2

4. Remove temptations

Do not keep cigarettes where you can easily get to them.

5. Keep busy

Do something with your hands to keep them too busy to have time to smoke. Replace bad habits with good.

6. Exercise

This will do two things: it will help keep you from gaining weight, which is often a problem, and it will help you to realize how much better you feel without cigarettes.

Smoking defiles both the body and the spirit; Christians should never do it.

H. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. Explain "you are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19).
2. Define "filthiness" (1 Corinthians 7:1).
3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:12. What did Paul mean by "all things are lawful for me?"
4. If someone has to eat a little bit of cornbread about every half hour of the day, would you say he has a problem with self-control?
5. Do you think smoking sinful? If so or if not, why?
6. Have you heard other arguments given to justify smoking? If so, how would you answer?
7. Do you think it would be wrong to take only one puff on a cigarette just to see what it's like?

VII. Drinking And Drug Abuse

We are going to consider drinking and drug abuse together because that is where they belong. Ethanol (ethyl alcohol) is in fact a drug and one most widely abused drug in this country. Most people do not look at drinking the same way they look at the use of illegal drugs. The truth is that they should. That which can be said about the abuse of alcohol can also be said about the abuse of any drug.

A. Abuse

What is abuse? This English word is a compound of the prefix "ab-," meaning from, off, or away, and the root word: use or utilize. It is therefore an off-use, a misuse, a use away from what ought to be. Webster states, "To put to a wrong or improper use." So let's clarify what we are and are not talking about. Most drugs have some rightful, therapeutic use. Doctors prescribe these, or they can be easily purchased at stores. Their intended use is to improve the quality of life or treat ailments. Such proper use of substances is mentioned in scripture:

Luke 7:46 "You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil."

Luke 10:34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

1 Timothy 5:23 Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities.

James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

We are not talking about the proper use of things; we are talking about improper use. In a different subject matter, the misuse of a thing is mentioned in scripture:

*KJV 1 Corinthians 9:18 What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I **abuse** not my power in the gospel.*

So, how are substances used wrong today?

1. Wrong amount or dose

A doctor may prescribe or we may otherwise rightfully purchase some drug. All drugs have a recommended dosage for proper use. If we use the substances for longer periods or in higher amounts, we are abusing, as is often done when a doctor prescribes a drug to help someone with a sleeping problem.

2. Wrong user

If we take medications that a doctor prescribed for someone else's problem, we are abusing.

3. Wrong substance

Some drugs are by-products of research. Drugs are not invented as much as they are discovered. New compounds are formulated and tested on animals and human subjects. Some are found to have harmful or unpredictable effects, which a doctor would never prescribe. Such drugs have no known legitimate purpose. These substances enter illegal markets for no other use than abuse. Examples are the drugs ecstasy and crack cocaine.

4. Wrong use

Some substances are not drugs at all but are nevertheless capable of producing effects similar to drugs. They have other legitimate uses that have nothing to do with medicines or medical research. Examples are sniffing glue and paint.

5. Wrong purpose

In many cases, a substance is used simply for recreation or personal enjoyment. We then have to determine the legitimacy of the very use itself. As a Christian, God's word is our standard for making this determination. For example, skin conditioner is used for its soothing effect, and the Bible makes no indication that this is sinful. On the other hand, alcoholic beverages are also used for a soothing effect: the purpose of intoxication. There's nothing wrong with recreation or personal enjoyment, but the Bible has plenty to say about the sinfulness of intoxication. This also is abuse, and our study will look at this in greater detail.

B. A Clinical View of Drug Abuse

1. Classifications

All drugs are used to influence the mind and body in an attempt to alter the emotions, change the senses, essentially fool the body, and escape reality. There are three basic classifications of drugs that are abused:

Hallucinogens

This group of drugs includes "psychedelics." Researchers do not fully understand how they work in the nervous system, but Webster's dictionary states they are used to "affect with visions or imaginary perceptions...perception of objects with no reality usually arising from disorder of the nervous system." Marijuana is in this category.

Stimulants

This group includes drugs called "amphetamines." They work to increase the rate of signals transmitted in the nervous system. They thus cause a heightened awareness or sensitivity with an increased heart rate. Caffeine and nicotine are in this category.

Depressants

This group includes drugs called "barbiturates." They work to chemically block signals between nerve cells. They thus cause sluggishness and sleepiness. Alcohol is in this category.

All of these drugs have varying capabilities of addicting us or causing bodily harm, if abused. Our studies in morality show that to glorify God in our bodies, which are temples of God bought by the blood of Christ, we should not intentionally do ourselves harm. Furthermore, our studies show that addiction is a lack of self-control, which is sin.

Out of all, caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine are the most abused drugs today. Nicotine abuse in cigarette smoking is so prevalent, harmful, and cruelly addictive that a separate study is devoted to it. For now, let's take closer consideration of caffeine and alcohol abuse.

2. Caffeine

Caffeine is a naturally occurring compound in plants, especially cocoa nuts, coffee beans, and tea leaves. It therefore shows up in a broad range of our food products. It blocks the chemical receptors in nerves that naturally produce sleepiness. This blockage fools the body into thinking it needs to produce more adrenaline, a hormone that naturally kicks up our energy level when we are frightened. The effect of caffeine on the body has considerable variation from person to person; some are more susceptible to its effects than others.

It also chemically works similarly to heroin and cocaine, which probably gives it the ability to addict but to a very much milder degree. This is probably why some beverage companies intentionally add caffeine to their product to get customers to keep buying it.

Caffeine can kill in a large dose equivalent to drinking 80 to 100 cups of coffee in rapid succession: not an easy feat. The greatest practical long-term health problem associated with caffeine abuse is sleep deprivation, which can lead to irritability. Once addicted, attempts to break the addiction can lead to fatigue, depression, and headaches. Being a stimulant, caffeine does not produce debilitating effects. No automobile accident ever resulted from too much caffeine consumption. Homes have never been wrecked as a result of caffeine abuse.

Caffeine use is nowhere explicitly mentioned in scripture, but then, again, neither is smoking. However, we have seen that scripture does condemn addiction of any kind. If we are addicted to caffeine, to us, it is sin. Some researchers today suggest that if a person is drinking four or more cups of coffee in a day, they probably have a dependency problem.

3. Alcohol

Statistics help us understand the magnitude of the problems of alcohol abuse. In the United States today there are at least 80 million people who use alcoholic beverages and the number seems to increase all the time. Of that number it is conservatively estimated that 7 million are what could be called "problem drinkers" and out of those at least 3 million are alcoholics.

You might ask "What does that have to do with young people?" Probably most of the problem drinkers or alcoholics that you have seen are adults. However, a recent survey among college students helps us to see why we would talk about these sins to young people. Of college students who drink, 4 out of 5 men and 2 out of 3 women began to drink while they were in high school. Even if statistics didn't bear it out, experience would teach that people generally begin to drink when they are young – about high school age.

Dr. T. Mark Lloyd, of Gainesville, Florida, wrote, "Alcohol is a drug which has both immediate (acute) effects and more longer lasting (chronic) effects. Usually it is the immediate effects that the drinker is seeking. The first organ system that shows a rapid effect from alcohol is the brain. The brain is quite compartmentalized and there are certain areas that perform different functions. The frontal portion of our brain called the frontal lobe (that part of the brain which anatomically and neurologically separates man from other animals) controls our inhibitions among other things. It so happens that this is the portion of the brain quickly affected by alcohol. This is why we see a person becoming 'happier', louder and more boisterous. He begins to do things he would not normally do. (By the way, this is not the point at which a person is as yet defined by all criteria as being drunk.) This is also why it is so very dangerous for the young and others who otherwise under normal conditions have proper sexual inhibitions, but may lose these inhibitions while drinking, thus engaging in sexual activities they would not normally do. Now we can begin to see why people like alcohol and it's immediate effects. Other acute effects are visual disturbances, loss of balance, and loss of motor coordination. If questioned closely, law enforcement officials will tell you anywhere from 50 to 90 percent of all automobile accidents are a direct or indirect result of someone being under the influence of alcohol. Not necessarily drunk either, but just drinking and not in total control of all faculties or not totally aware of circumstances."

Dr. Lloyd continues, "The ill effects of alcohol also have their longer lasting results. The most common problem is that of cirrhosis or loss of liver function. The liver is the organ in the body that detoxifies alcohol. If taken in abundance and for a long period of time, the liver can and will be destroyed by this drug. This type of individual is not a very pretty sight to see. Usually at this stage he also has chronic brain damage which is the direct result of the alcohol as well. The gastrointestinal tract is the next most common organ that is affected by alcohol. Disasters such as ulcers, stomach inflammation, and severe bleeding from the esophagus or stomach can occur as a result of alcoholic consumption. The heart can most definitely become adversely involved from it's chronic use. Secondly, the pancreas, muscles, skin, and a number of other organs are also involved destructively."

With much drinking, brain cells are destroyed. Alcohol causes agglutination, or thickening of the blood, and can lead to blockage of the blood flow through some of the brain cells. Starved of oxygen for as little as three minutes, the affected cells will die and the damage is permanent. They will not revive themselves or grow back.

C. What does the Bible Say of the Effects of Alcohol Abuse?

1. Harmful – Physically

Proverbs 23:29-34

- Woe, sorrow, contentions, wounds
- Stomach ailments
- Hallucinations, redness of eyes
- Silly talking, impaired speech
- Disorientation, confusion, and dizziness
- Lack of sensibility
- Addiction

2. Harmful – In Happiness and Prosperity

Proverbs 21:17; 23:21

- Poverty is his.
- He shall be a poor man; he shall not be rich.

3. Harmful – Mentally

Proverbs 31:4, 5

- Forgetfulness
- Adversely affects judgment

4. What Can Be Lost?

- Noah lost his decency (Genesis 9:20-29).
- Lot's daughters lost their virginity (Genesis 19:30-36).
- David lost his integrity in the case of Uriah (2 Samuel 11:13).
- Belshazzar lost his kingdom (Daniel 5).

- Ahasuerus lost his wife and his self-respect. (Esther 1:10-21).
- We can lose our influence (Titus 2:7, 8).
- If we engage in this kind of activity, we will lose our souls (1 Corinthians 6:10).

D. The Bible Condemns Drinking

Consider carefully these two passages:

NKJ Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

NKJ 1 Peter 4:3 For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles -- when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

Lets take a look at the words underlined above in the original Greek text:

- Sorcery [PHARMAKEIA] (from whence the English word "pharmacy" is derived) – J. H. Thayer defines this as (1) the use or the administering of drugs (2) poisoning (3) sorcery, magical arts, often found in connection with idolatry and fostered by it, and (4) metaphorically, the deceptions and seductions of idolatry.
- Drunkenness (Galatians 5) [METHE] (from whence, the English "methanol," a type of alcohol) – This is defined as drunkenness, habitual intoxication, deep drinking, drunken bouts.
- Drunkenness (1 Peter 4) [OINOPHLUGIA] – Thayer simply defines it as drunkenness. The King James Version accurately renders it "excess of wine," indicating habitual intoxication. It marks a step in advance of the drunkenness (METHE) mentioned in Galatians 5.
- Revelries [KOMOS] – J. H. Thayer defines this as "(1) a revel, carousal (1a) a nocturnal and riotous procession of half drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honour of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before houses of male and female friends; hence used generally of feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry."
- Drinking parties [POTOS] – The NKJ Version renders this as "banquetings." Be careful not to read this as "drunken parties;" that would be KOMOS. Literally, POTOS is a "drinking" without reference to amount. The verb form is POTIZO, "to give to drink" without regard to amount. R.C. Trench says, "not of necessity excessive." He further explains that POTOS is related to words of excess in that it gives "opportunity for excess". This is cocktail party drinking, sipping of wine, and social drinking. This includes consumption of such a small amount that no alteration in behavior or senses could be detected.

There is a progressiveness evident in these words. They describe every aspect of drinking today from just casually tasting wine, to drinking for the purpose of merrymaking, to getting the beer-buzz, to being completely drunk, and to being passed out in your own vomit. Scripture condemns them all.

The Bible is full of references to drunkenness too numerous to begin to mention. We will suffice to say that it is never cast in a favorable light by the inspired writers and is often associated with harlotry, idolatry, indecency, shamefulness, sorrow, and destruction.

Any substance that would behave like alcohol to similarly lower inhibitions, dull the senses, alter our perceptions, harm the body, or addict us is also condemned in scripture on a matter of principle.

We shouldn't need to mention that underage drinking and the use of illegal substances is sin because it also violates civil law, to which a Christian is to be in subjection.

Romans 13:1-6

God does not make any meaningless or arbitrary prohibitions; all are for the good of His creation.

E. Why do Young People Drink or Abuse Drugs?

1. Curiosity

A lot of young folks drink and abuse drugs because they want to see what it is like.

2. To be Accepted

This is peer pressure. Maybe the greatest number of young people drink or use drugs because they want to be accepted. Everybody wants to be liked. It is rare to find a young person who first drinks or first takes drugs alone. Generally speaking, these are things that are, at least initially, done with others.

Concerning peer pressure, we all need to realize that young people are under a lot of pressure. Adults may easily think a teenager has nothing to feel pressure about. They don't have to pay the bills or go to work everyday or be responsible for the needs of their families. The truth is, young people do feel pressure. They are in a period of physical and emotional change with worries about their appearance, doubts about their future, concerns about school work, uncertainties in the church, or confusion about expectations, and they don't have the experience or maturity to always deal with them properly. Young people need to know that others understand and are here to help. Drugs abuse is certainly not the answer.

3. Unhappiness

Maybe you just don't like the way things are. You don't like it at home – mom and dad just don't understand. You don't like it at school, maybe you don't see the point of it. You don't like it at church, maybe you feel like you don't have any real friends. Some young people are deceived into thinking that drinking or drugs can ease that unhappiness for a little while.

4. Influences of Society

We shouldn't jump to blame our environment, but it is a contributing factor. Think about what television and advertisements teach us. Young people don't always understand that TV commercials are designed by people who will say just about anything to get you to buy their product. Consequently, what do we hear? If you are fat, take a pill; if you can't sleep, take a pill; if your stomach is upset, take a pill; if you're constipated, take a pill; if you want stronger fingernails, take a pill; if you have a headache, take a pill, and on and on. We are taught that if anything at all is bothering you – take a pill.

The music we choose to listen to has an influence on us. In the 1960's, the drug culture began, and to deny that is was influenced by music is to be like the ostrich with it's head in the sand. Lots of music today still promotes drug abuse and escaping from reality.

You can probably come up with a hundred other reasons why young people turn to alcohol or other drugs. Please understand, it just makes sense not to drink or to abuse drugs. It will take away your health, your happiness, your mind, and most importantly, your soul.

F. Excuses to Justify Recreational Drinking and Drug Abuse

1. "The Bible only condemns drunkenness."

This is always stated by a person who hasn't actually studied the matter. We've shown this to be false.

2. "Titus 3:18 actually says deacons can have a little wine."

"Not addicted to much wine" does not imply that a little is okay. You cannot be addicted to a little, anyway.

3. "Jesus made wine (John 2:1-11)."

The New Testament Greek word for "wine" [OINOS] is used both for grape juice that does contain alcohol and juice that does not. You have to determine from the context whether or not it is alcoholic. There is nothing in this context that would remotely suggest that Jesus must have made intoxicating wine at this feast.

In English, we use the word "drunk" to mean both the past tense of drink and intoxicated. However, in the Greek, there are different words. The word PINO means simply to consume liquid; the word METHUO means to be intoxicated. John 2 does not state that the wedding guests became drunk (METHUO) on the wine Jesus produced.

4. "Paul told Timothy to drink wine (1 Tim 5:23)."

Modern clinical studies show that regulated, daily consumption of a small amount of wine containing alcohol can have some health benefits. However, studies also show that pure grape juice also contains chemicals that benefit the body. Therefore, we need to recognize that Paul only may or may not be recommending alcoholic wine, specifically. However, it seems strange that Paul would feel the need to encourage taking grape juice, and only a little, if grape juice is already commonly used and is harmless in larger quantities. Therefore, if Timothy is thinking that alcohol ought not be taken even medicinally by a Christian, Paul could be clarifying that alcoholic wine, like many other drugs, has a proper use, yet it is not to be abused, as by large quantities. So even if intoxicating wine is the subject, we have established from the start that drug abuse, not legitimate use, is what the Bible condemns.

We stated earlier that drinking even in small quantities is sinful, but we observe now that a small quantity is lawful. The difference lies in the purpose. The legitimate use is for medicinal purposes; the abuse is for the mere purpose of being sociable. The mature Christian must be very careful about his influence. Paul warns us about misusing our liberties (1 Cor 8:8-13). A social gathering is not the time or place for a Christian to "take his medicine." Others who see him drinking might assume he is simply taking part in the merry-making. Even if his consumption is the slightest sip, they could by his actions be tempted into excessiveness, and he would thereby take a part in their guilt. Paul's instruction to Timothy in no way condones social, recreational, or celebratory drinking.

5. "Marijuana is not addictive."

This may be true, but marijuana obviously impairs sensibility. Clinical studies also clearly show that continued use can cause bodily harm. These reasons alone violate scriptural principles.

6. "Marijuana does not actually 'lead to doing other drugs;' that is a myth."

The point is not that marijuana itself leads to other things but the general interest in using drugs of any kind. If I have associated myself with someone who will illegally sell me marijuana or smoke it with me, I am in the wrong crowd. They will not have a good influence on me.

G. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. If it takes four beers to "get drunk," how drunk are you if only one beer is consumed?
2. Do any of the word studies in this lesson deal with being only partially drunk?
3. If drunkenness is engaged only in the privacy of my own home, how might that have a bad effect on others not in my household?
4. Would you see any danger in drinking non-alcoholic beer out with your friends?
5. How can drunkenness adversely effect a marriage relationship?
6. Can you think of ways television and movies have glamorized drinking?
7. Are there certain situations where drinking just a little alcohol would be okay?
8. What is missing in the popular "drink responsibly" promotion heard today?
9. For older young adults, when someone asks you why you're not drinking, what do you tell them?

VIII. Sexual Immorality

An improper relationship with the opposite sex is probably the number one problem among teenage Christians. The increasing permissiveness of society has even entered into the Lord's church.

The strong sexual desire that is part of every human being is not sinful. It is a natural instinct of man placed there by the Creator for the good of mankind. However, with each natural, human desire God gives, He gives us also the responsibility to maintain control of it.

As with all matters studied in morality, we will examine human sexuality in the light of God's word. This lesson will show that God does not expect us to behave however we wish to fulfill these desires, but He has set limitations. Concerning sexual immorality, the apostle Paul states, "it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done," (Ephesians 5:12). The intention of this study is not to embarrass or offend the student but to frankly identify sinful behavior.

A. The Biblical Words Of Sexual Immorality

Let's define what we're talking about. It is the first four words in Paul's list of the deeds of the flesh:

Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness...

1. Fornication [PORNEIA]

This word appears 26 times in the New Testament. Each time, the King James Version renders it "fornication." Some English translations use the phrase "sexual immorality." This may give a connotation too general; for example, viewing pornography is sin and can be considered sexual immorality, but it is not fornication. Fornication always involves improper sexual relations with others. J. H. Thayer offers the following definition of PORNEIA:

- 1) Illicit sexual intercourse
 - a. adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals, etc.
 - b. sexual intercourse with close relatives;
 - c. sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman;
- 2) Metaphorically, the worship of idols
 - a. of the defilement of idolatry, as incurred by eating the sacrifices offered to idols.

The phrase "sexual intercourse" is defined by Merriam-Webster as "physical sexual contact between individuals that involves the genitalia of at least one person." It continues to explain that this is not limited to only the so-called "sex act," but also includes other physical contact of sexual body parts.

Three key points are noted in these definitions:

- Fornication always involves activity with another.
- Fornication always involves physical sexual contact of some kind.
- Fornication always involves illicit or lawless behavior.

The word "fornication" therefore includes every kind of unlawful sexual relations:

- Pre-marital sex (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2)
- Adultery, extra-marital sex (Matthew 19:9)
- Homosexuality (Romans 1:26-28)
- Harlotry and prostitution (1 Timothy 1:9, 10)
- Incest (1 Corinthians 5:1)
- Bestiality (Leviticus 20:15, 16)

Plainly stated, when physical, sexual contact takes place between two who are not lawfully husband and wife, that is fornication, and the Bible calls it sin. God's disdain for such immorality is seen in the fact that there are seven lists of evil in the writings of Paul; fornication is listed in five of them and is the first one mentioned in each case.

2. Adultery [MOICHEIA]

This is simply the special case of fornication involving married people, or as W. E. Vine puts it, "unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another." So far-reaching is this offense that a marriage bond can be broken that might have otherwise survived a lifetime.

3. Uncleanness [AKATHARSIA]

J. H. Thayer defines this as not only physical uncleanness but, in a moral sense, the impurity of lustful living completely given over to lewdness and the self-indulgent gratification of fleshly desires.

4. Lewdness [ASELGEIA]

Literally meaning "without restraint," Thayer defines this as unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence, and continues to add "unchaste handling of males and females."

B. Sexuality Is A Beautiful Thing

In former times, sex was considered shameful by some societies and to be engaged only for conception. This notion probably arose because of abuses, such as prostitution. However, the Bible shows that, in the proper circumstance, sex is an approved gift of God. Nevertheless, in improper circumstances, it is dirty.

1. Marriage is the proper place

A story is often told of a farmer who, outside in his garden, picks up a handful of soil from the ground. As he handles it, he can see the parts of sand, clay, and decomposing organic matter that comprises it along with the occasional earthworm or other bug. He brings it up to his nose and smells the life-supporting nutrients and knows he can grow vegetables in that soil. He then throws the soil back to the ground. That's where it belongs, and it is beautiful there in his garden. He would never take that handful of soil into the house and throw it on the kitchen table. It doesn't belong there. That would be dirty.

So it is with sexuality. The Bible teaches that marriage between a man and a woman is the proper place; sex is right and beautiful there. Outside of marriage, it is unclean. Consider these passages:

Proverbs 5:15-23

Hint to reader: he's not actually talking about water from cisterns and fountains.

Song of Solomon 5:1

Hebrews 13:4

Marriage is the only divinely appointed relationship where these desires may be gratified.

2. Modern theology

Modern-day preachers in false religion teach that the Bible does not condemn sex between unmarried couples but only condemns harlotry, incest, and adultery. Is this true? What does the Bible say? Read carefully these passages and note the following:

1 Corinthians 6:12-18

To begin, these verses condemn fornication in clear language, and fornication is not limited only to incest, harlotry, and adultery. Every reputable definition of that term includes pre-marital sex in its meaning. Read on...

1 Corinthians 7:2, 8, 9

If sex is lawful between unmarried couples, why would the apostle say in verse 2 that, in order to avoid fornication, a man should take a wife and a woman should take a husband? Again, if pre-marital sex is okay, why would he say to unmarried couples in verses 8 and 9 that they should get married to satisfy their burning desires?

False teachers want to distort the truth because it is not very enjoyable to tell people they are involved in sin. However, this is God's word, and the truth is the truth. Whether we want to accept it or not, that's just the way it is, and this is the standard by which we will be judged.

C. Love Is The Rule

The New Testament Greek language has at least four different words for love:

- AGAPE = Godly love; the love for strangers or enemies that always seeks their highest good.
- PHILEO = the love of close friendship and things familiar to us.
- STORGE = the natural love between family members.
- EROS = the love of romance between the sexes that arouses physical attraction.

The word EROS does not occur in the New Testament, but the concept of this passionate love does appear, as our study shows.

The word AGAPE has the deepest meaning of all. It defines the way God loves. This is sacrificial love and always puts others ahead of self. This love, which governs and controls all other kinds of love, is best described in 1 Corinthians 13. Note particularly these verses:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Let's consider the way AGAPE controls the behavior of EROS.

1. Love is kind

The Song Of Solomon most vividly describes the nature of physical love between a man and a woman. One of the strongest messages learned is about mutual admiration and friendship. Note the language of adoration and respect between them:

Song of Solomon 4:8-11

Song of Solomon 5:16

True love will never do anything to belittle another or put them to shame.

2. Love is patient

The Song Of Solomon teaches young lovers to wait until the proper time to fulfill these desires, indicated poetically by the repeating phrase, "Do not stir up love until it pleases."

Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4

The woman is described as a garden enclosed and filled with delicate flowers and fruits in the following verses:

Song of Solomon 4:12-16

The lovers do not rush in and stomp through the garden; this would damage the "tender grapes," (2:13) the things that are to be kept fresh and new. Note particularly the phrase "Awake, O north wind, ... That its spices may flow out." This suggests waiting until the proper time; you have to wait for the "north wind" to blow.

True love will never say anything to pressure or tempt another.

3. Love is not self-serving

The one who loves you the most will be the one who loves what is right like you do and will do everything in their power to help you get to heaven.

Song of Solomon 2:4-6

True love will never use another for selfish purposes or harm them.

4. Love is strong

So strong is the emotion of this love that it can cause significant side effects: our heart rate quickens, our palms get sweaty, our speech begins to stutter, and we get weak in the knees. No wonder she says, "I am lovesick:"

Song of Solomon 8:6, 7

True love will always stand and do the right thing.

D. The Right Way, Divine Design

God designed sex, and He ordained marriage, so He knows what is best for us. If we fulfill these desires according to God's law, we will find ourselves much happier in the end. It may be hard for young people to understand now how that could be, but if you will do it God's way, when you become older, you'll be glad you did with no regrets.

Ecclesiastes 12:1

Paul compares marriage to the relationship of Christ and His church. If Christ's relationship with the church is pure, then marriage is pure. Sex is a privilege of marriage the same as forgiveness is a privilege of being in the church.

Ephesians 5:21-33

E. The Wrong Way

1. What Is Lost?

What is lost when people engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage? Remember, once a deed has been done, there's no undoing it. You can repent and say you're sorry and be forgiven, but still there is the loss of something special. Your chastity is a gift you can give only once. A relationship is deepened and special when both parties have waited until marriage. The world may see this as foolish and old-fashioned, but from the beginning, we have established that the world's view is not our standard.

So what do you stand to lose?

- Self respect
- Respect for your partner
- A clear conscience
- Your reputation
- Your eternal salvation

2. What Is Missing?

There's a lot more to marriage than sex. If sex is engaged without marriage, all the other wonderful things God designed for you are missing:

1. It is not based on love but physical lust. If it were truly love, it could not be sin; love and sin are incompatible (1 John 5:3). Also, consider this, when the physical attractiveness begins to fade due to years or disease, the relationship will probably not endure.
2. True companionship is not enjoyed (Song of Solomon 6:3). There is no commitment in a relationship of convenience. Whenever one pleases, they may up and leave, and where will that leave you?
3. There is no genuine mutual concern (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). When each partner puts the other ahead of themselves, there is a contentment like no other. This selfless, sharing care is of divine origin.
4. Trust is missing (Proverbs 31:10). To know that the promises of the spouse are as unfailing as the promises of God brings a peace no one else knows. There is no need for suspicion and no place for jealousy.
5. This is a false oneness (Genesis 2:18-25). "One flesh" suggests much more than sexual oneness. In fact, it is completely possible to be married, that is "one flesh," and be physically incapable of sexual intimacy due to an injury or deformity. Such a relationship would likely crumble if not based upon godliness. The flesh is the medium through which we experience life on this earth. To be "one flesh" means to share every aspect of this life; your hopes, your dreams, your goals, your desires, your plans, and your wants are one.
6. Confidence is lost (Proverbs 28:1). If you engage in random sex, you have to worry about venereal disease and unwanted pregnancy.

3. Homosexuality

Homosexuality is sin, though many religious leaders today deny it.

Romans 1:24-28

1 Timothy 1:9, 10

Many people today claim that the homosexual inclination sometimes naturally occurs in certain people, as if simply a physical feature or personality trait. Once this is presumed, the next conclusion is that, if this is the way God makes certain people, then they do not have the ability within them to be anything else, and they ought not be judged on that. However, we must accept God's word as authority rather than the suppositions of men. The Bible tells us that it is indeed possible for people to give up their homosexual practices.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified,..."

Even if a person has an inclination toward homosexuality, that does not permit him to gratify the desires of the flesh simply because he likes it. The pleasurable nature of sin has never been its justification. Besides, we would not think a fit of rage would be acceptable behavior of someone just because he has more inclination toward anger than others as a personality trait. Homosexuality is practiced by people who simply want to abandon self control and serve their own desires rather than the Creator.

Since homosexuality is sin, it is not a laughing matter. It is not something in which a Christian should find any humor. Television shows, movies, and theatre today press homosexuality upon society, calling it merely an "alternate lifestyle." The word "gay" has been adopted by them as a euphemism to suggest that they are simply happier and friendlier than others. However, the Bible calls it depraved, unnatural, degrading, indecent, and improper. With jokes and making light of any who would say it is wrong, they attempt to "desensitize" our culture to the activity. A Christian professing moral virtues ought never become desensitized to sin.

1 Timothy 4:2

Furthermore, it is not adequate simply to refrain from actively practicing homosexuality. If we are not willing to openly state that this is wrong when confronted with the matter, we effectively give our approval and thereby take part in this sin.

Romans 1:32

Ephesians 5:11

F. Practical Applications

Learning what the Bible teaches on sexual immorality and putting it into practice every day are two entirely different things. When you are out on a date, for example, what can you do to help make sure you keep yourself pure? Here are some important things for young people to think about to help maintain control.

1. Be selective who you date.

This doesn't mean you have to view everyone you date as a candidate for marriage, but you should know something about their character. This is especially important if you date a non-Christian; they may not have the same moral standards as you or recognize the same limitations as you (1 Corinthians 15:33). Be careful about becoming involved in a serious, on-going relationship with a non-Christian who shows no interest in spiritual things. Ask yourself, "Is this someone who will help me get to heaven or hinder me?"

2. Be on guard during private times.

When you're on a date, there will be occasions when the two of you are all alone. Do not think that, because no one sees you, anything is different. We may hide these sins from others, but nothing is secret from God (Hebrews 4:13). Do not invite problems by planning a date where much of your time is spent in private. It is always easier to **stay** out of difficult situations than to **get** out.

3. Show your affection with moderation.

There's nothing wrong with hugging and kissing, but long sessions of this can easily get out of hand. The next step is inappropriate touching, or petting. Remember that the Bible warns against lewdness, which includes by definition "unchaste handling of males and females." Read Ezekiel 23:1-3, and remember that fondling private body parts is equivalent to fornication.

Paul's instruction is to "flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18), "flee also youthful lusts" (2 Timothy 2:22), and "abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). This does not mean see how close you can get to doing it without actually doing it! Try kissing less and talking more with each other; you may learn something.

4. Do not deceive yourself.

There's different kinds of sexual activity. You may be asking yourself what exactly constitutes having sex? If you have to wonder about it, you have probably gone too far. Remember, if intimate physical contact is made, sex with an adjective in front of it is still sex.

G. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. What is the difference between fornication and adultery?
2. The Bible says that God provides the way of escape in every temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). What if I feel like I just can't help myself?
3. If I'm engaged to another, isn't that like being married, since we've already given each other a pledge? What would then be wrong with beginning sexual activity?
4. Genesis 2:24 says, "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." What does it mean to be one flesh?
5. Is there anything wrong with making fun of homosexual people? Explain your answer.
6. What's wrong with petting?

IX. Abortion

A. Introduction

We would be hard pressed to find a more emotionally charged issue in the United States today than the debate that rages around the subject of abortion. Politically, careers hang in the balance depending upon how one views the subject. Legally, the questions rage around the legal status of the unborn child. Biologically, the question is "when does human life actually begin". Morally, the question is, "Is it murder?" It is a question about which Christians must have an opinion, and that opinion must be the right one.

1. The Size of the Problem

In 1979 the Cincinnati Enquirer wrote, "When the Supreme Court knocked out state anti-abortion laws six years ago, it made legal killing the nation's most common form of surgery. The toll so far is awesome: At least 6,000,000 legal abortions since that January 22, 1973 decree, close to two a minute. Look at Washington D.C., the nation's if not the world's abortion capital: in 1976, an unbelievable 9102 abortions were performed on white women for every 1000 live births. For other races the ration was 2210 for every 1000 babies born."

2. What is Abortion?

Simply put, an abortion is the destruction and discarding of an unborn baby. There are several methods of abortion normally performed. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine them in any detail. It will be sufficient to state that a description of what actually takes place is as horrific as any torture imaginable. One particularly gruesome and controversial method is called a "partial birth" abortion. In this, as the name suggests, the baby is essentially killed while partway through the mother's birth canal.

B. Pro-Abortion Arguments

1. "Abortion is allowable if, in the opinion of the mother, a birth would cause economic or social difficulties."

A statement such as this demonstrates that it is time to evaluate priorities and values. Should economic and social considerations be placed above life?

Psalm 127:3-5

Children are to be a blessing from God, not a curse.

1Timothy 2:15

This teaches that in child-bearing women can find a wonderful blessing. Certainly, finances and social activities plan an important role in our lives, but any decisions we make concerning them must be made from a proper biblical perspective. The Bible teaches that children are a marvelous blessing from God, and to view them as an unwanted burden, either economically or socially, is to have a completely perverted set of priorities.

To kill and destroy an unborn baby simply because it is going to be a burden is the highest form of arrogance, abhorrence, and selfishness. The mother has options other than simply killing her baby. If she is not financially able to care for the baby, she can find suitable adoptive parents, which is the highest form of humility, love, and selflessness: characteristics of God himself.

Ephesians 1:3-6

2. "Abortion is justified when there is the likely prospect that the child will be born mentally or physically defective."

Once again the question of values and priorities could be raised, but there is another way to look at this argument.

Hebrews 9:27

We are all going to die. This question is, does that give me the right, or anyone the right, to decide to end the life of an unborn baby who is as much alive as you or me? The answer to that question is that we do not have the right. All through the Bible murder is condemned. Defective or not, that human being growing in the womb of it 's mother is still created in the image of God and we do not have the right to end his or her existence.

3. "Abortion is justified for medical reasons – i.e., to save the life of the mother."

To set the record straight, such cases are very rare and becoming more so all the time. However, this issue is, does the mother's health warrant the killing of her tiny son or daughter? There is a lesson taught in Proverbs that is helpful in this case.

Proverbs 18:14

Think about this for a minute: my physical condition is important, but more so are those qualities in my spirit that make me what I am. We can never violate divine teaching in pursuit of physical comfort or even life.

Let's look at a parallel. Suppose that you were dying, and you needed a kidney to live. Let's suppose that you knew someone who has a kidney that your body would accept. Now this potential donor is very much alive, but you are stronger than he is. If you wanted his kidney, could you take it by force? Would you be justified in killing this person so that you may live?

4. "Abortion is justified in cases of rape and incest."

Isn't it interesting that our society has determined that a guilty rapist cannot be executed for his crime, but then it turns right around and says that if pregnancy results from that rape you can execute the innocent unborn child?

Surely in situations such as this the mental and emotional anguish must be tremendous. But the Bible teaches that God will not allow us to be tested beyond that which we are able to bear.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Therefore, if a burden has been placed upon me and there is not a right means of removing that burden given in God's word, then He has promised to sustain me through it. Listen to the Lord's instruction:

Hebrews 4:15, 16

The Lord invites us to approach Him when our burdens are great. If in these cases abortion is justified because of the mental anguish, then what we are saying is that emotional stress and anguish justifies the killing of another human being. That simply is not morally right and proper. Rather than resorting to killing to relieve mental stress we must turn to God, and with His help, learn to deal with circumstances as they are.

C. Who Has The Right?

The ultimate goal of those who desire abortion on-demand is that abortion should be an absolute right and that law should not interfere, except to regulate the standards of those doing the abortions. This is based upon the assumption that a woman has the right to control her own body. A leading feminist by the name of Margaret Sanger said, "No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother." The belief that a woman has the right to control her own body and therefore have an abortion if she wants one must be rejected for the reasons that follow.

Only God has absolute rights. We have rights, but they are only privileges that God has given us. Mankind has no absolute rights. No one has the rights to his or her own body. Whatever liberties God has extended to us, the freedom to do whatever we want with our bodies with impunity is not one of them.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

Titus 2:14

In marriage, control over one's body is given to the marriage partner.

1 Corinthians 7:4

The non-Christian, also, still has responsibilities to God as his Creator. Besides, even if the mother had rights over her own body, that unborn child is not part of her body. This is a simple biological fact. That child has a separate blood supply, separate circulatory system, separate heartbeat, separate brainwaves, and even it's own separate will very early along. From the day of fertilization the human embryo is distinctly foreign tissue to it's mother. In abortion, a completely separate human being is destroyed.

One more comment is needed to Margret Sanger's statement. When a woman makes the conscious choice of becoming sexually active, she must also accept the possibility of conceiving a child. It is a necessary and unavoidable possible consequence of her actions.

D. A Scriptural Approach

There are many different approaches that can be taken when discussing abortion from a negative standpoint, but the most important viewpoint of all is scripture. As with all our examination of moral issues, we will focus on what the Bible says about the life of the unborn child developing within it's mother's womb.

Much of the debate centers around whether or not the developing child is really a human being, in the same sense that we are. The pro-abortionists would be forced to deny that the unborn child is fully human. The question is, what does the Creator of life say? If we can show that the Creator, God, views the developing child as a distinct, very real human being, then for all good and honest hearts, the debate is ended – abortion would be murder.

1. God's Life-giving Effort

Genesis 1:27 – 2:7

God created human life only once, after that, He was finished with all and rested from His creative work. From that point, life procreates. The idea of procreation is that **new** life begins, not that **life** begins. Life is a continuous process. The question inside the womb is not "when does life begin?" but "when does a **new** life begin?"

2. God's Activity In The Womb

Job 10:8-12

Job is talking about the process of his own bodily formation. In very beautiful poetic language, Job describes his development in the womb. He begins by comparing his formation to the pouring out of milk into a container, suggesting the beginning of fertilization. Then, God begins to "stir the milk", turning it into cheese, or the finished product. God is directly and intimately involved with the child from the start to the finish. This is not some inhuman mass of tissue that God does not become involved with until birth, but rather this is a human being that God loves. According to verses 11 and 12, God Himself develops our frame and grants life and loving-kindness. This is hardly descriptive of an inhuman mass of tissue.

Jeremiah 1:4, 5

Once again we witness God's direct involvement with the child in it's mother's womb. This passage so clearly bears this out for it declares that God "knew" Jeremiah and consecrated him before he was born. This demonstrates that the developing child was viewed not as a mass of tissue only, but as a person, a human being. In this case, a human being who was set aside for service to the Lord prior to his birth, while still within the womb.

Psalms 139:13-16

This passage gives perhaps the most complete account of prenatal development in scripture. The whole psalm has as it's basic message the inescapable presence of God. It shows that no matter where we go, we cannot flee from our Creator. Why is God so intimately concerned about mankind?

When David begins verse 13 with the word "for", he is about to tell us that God's constant interest in man is simply the natural interest that a maker would have in a very special product. God had formed man's "inward parts". Literally translated this would be "kidneys", referring to man's most deep-seated organs. We are told that He weaved man in the mother's womb. What a graphic term to describe the process of development whereby God took the basic frame of man, which He had created, and laced it with series after series of cartilage, muscle, blood vessels, and tissue. Yes, God seeks us now because he made us then, and from our very earliest moments we were in His tender loving care. No wonder David exclaims, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made".

In verse 15, David is saying that even though this work is being performed out of the sight of man, God is there. He is skillfully forming the tissues and organs that physically are a person. Verse 16 shows that even before there is a discernible form to the human frame, God has his watchful eyes upon him. The word for "unformed substance" literally means something folded into the shape of an egg, much like a very early embryo. The point seems to be that even though this developing person does not look human yet, God is aware, interested, and active. His eye is upon the developing child and in a very real sense He is governing and guiding the development. It is interesting, also, that in these verses, David uses first person pronouns: "I, me, my". He regarded God to be at work with him personally, not merely with some mass of tissue that would later become a person.

When carefully considered, this passage must inspire respect for unborn human life. God is at work there. However, such respect for the Origin of life is not to be found among the pro-abortionists. Abortion is foul-tampering with the handiwork of God.

3. Human Activity In The Womb

Luke 1:39-45

This is the account of two pregnant women, carrying extraordinary children, and their coming together. Elizabeth was carrying John, and of course, Mary was carrying our Lord. By looking at this passage we can gain insights into the status of the unborn. Look at verse 36: Elizabeth was in her sixth month. (Today, less and less protection is being given to a six month old fetus.) As Mary came to Elizabeth and greeted her, John, the six-month-old developing baby within her leaped for joy. This wasn't just some sort of quickening or small movement, this was a very human reaction. This was also not coincidence; the Holy Spirit saw fit to specify that the reason was for joy. Here is proof that a developing unborn baby at the sixth month is capable of expressing joy: a human emotion.

Now, what of Jesus? We really do not know how far along Mary was at this time, but it is obvious that she was not too far into her pregnancy. In Luke 1:26-38, we are told about the angel appearing to Mary and telling her what was going to take place. In verse 39 of that chapter we find that "in those days" Mary arose and went to Elizabeth. So it was very soon after her conception that Mary went to her cousin Elizabeth. Jesus would have been very early in His development; according to pro-abortion arguments, He would not have been human. Yet, when Mary brought the unborn Jesus close to the unborn John, there was a leap of joy. It wasn't the arrival of Mary or a non-human mass of living tissue that prompted John's joy, it was the arrival in his home of the unborn Savior of the world. The passage is not just the account of the meeting of two expectant mothers – it is the account of the meeting of two as yet unborn children.

4. A Fetus Is A Human Baby

The Law Of Moses contains ordinances concerning the death of an unborn baby. Read carefully these verses:

Exodus 21:22-25

The NAS is a poor translation in this passage; it reads, "If men...strike a woman with child so that she has a miscarriage, yet there is no further injury, he shall surely be fined." The English word "miscarriage" means the birth of a dead child. From here, one would think that Moses' law states that if a man strikes a pregnant woman so that the baby dies, his punishment would not be for murder if no "further" injury resulted. However, the word here translated "miscarriage" simply means "to come out, to exit, to go forth," and the word "further" was added by the translators. All other reputable translations indicate that the baby simply comes out, alive or dead: either a miscarriage or a premature birth. The ordinance continues to stipulate that if no lasting harm results, that is, if the baby is born alive, he shall merely be fined. However, if injury follows to either the mother or the baby, he shall be punished life for life, limb for limb. If the baby is born dead, he will pay with his life, as if he had killed anyone else. The law makes no distinction between killing a man and killing a fetus: it is the taking of a human life.

Interestingly, in the original language of the New Testament, there is no equivalent for our English word "fetus." One word in Greek was used in scripture to refer to babies both born and unborn: BREPHOS. J. H. Thayer defines this as "1) an unborn child, embryo, a fetus; 2) a new-born child, an infant, a babe." Note these verses from the NKJ using the word BREPHOS:

<i>Luke 1:41</i>	Unborn: babe = BREPHOS
<i>Luke 1:44</i>	Unborn: babe = BREPHOS
<i>Luke 2:12, 16</i>	Born: babe = BREPHOS
<i>2 Timothy 3:15</i>	Born: childhood = BREPHOS
<i>1 Peter 2:2</i>	Born: new-born babes = BREPHOS

The inspired writers felt no need to show any distinction between children before and after birth – one word was sufficient to speak of both. Actually, this word usage in scripture describes unborn life, new-born life, and childhood. The conclusion is obvious: childhood extends into the womb.

The pro-abortionists prefer not to speak of the unborn this way. The term "product of conception" has even been used to refer to the unborn baby so we might not so easily think of it as a human life. Rarely today do we hear of a pregnant woman as being "with child."

5. The Act Of Begetting

The New Testament word in the original Greek for giving birth and bearing offspring is GENNAO (from whence, "generation"). Thayer defines this "of men who fathered children, to be born, to be begotten, of women giving birth to children..." An interesting use of this word is found in Matthew 1. The first 16 verses list the genealogy of Jesus. In each verse, this word, GENNAO is used to indicate that a man fathered a son. However, in verse 20 an angel tells Joseph that which is conceived in Mary is of the Holy Spirit. The word "conceived" here is the same word: GENNAO, or begotten. The Holy Spirit uses the same word to refer to either the process of conception or the process of birth without distinction. Christ was begotten of God before His birth. He was the living Son of God inside the womb as much as He was after His birth.

The point is this: the only event that we can logically look to as the beginning of the new life is conception.

6. "Without Natural Affection"

Romans 1:31

2 Timothy 3:3

The word translated "unloving" or "without natural affection" is ASTORGOS (from "A," meaning "without" and "STORGE," meaning "family love"). In his Daily Study Bible work, William Barclay writes this about Romans 1:31:

"STORGE was the special Greek word for family love. It was quite true that this was an age in which family love was dying. Never was the life of the child so precarious as at this time. Children were considered a misfortune. When a child was born, the child was taken and laid at the father's feet. If the father lifted up the child, that meant that he acknowledged it. If he turned away and left it, the child was literally thrown out. There was never a night when there were not thirty or forty abandoned children left in the Roman forum... Even Seneca, great soul as he was, could write: 'We kill a mad dog; we slaughter a fierce ox; we plunge the knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd; children who are born weakly and deformed we drown.' The natural bonds of human affection had been destroyed."

E. A Biological Viewpoint

The widespread acceptance of abortion has changed the concept of human worth in America. The Bible teaches that a person has worth merely because he is bearing the image of God. However, many today believe that is not enough. They have imposed other definitions upon God's simple truths. We are often told that since the developing embryo does not look human, it is not human.

With the scriptural arguments given, that should be the end of the matter. However, the science of biology bears out further testimony in harmony with scripture.

1. What are the facts?

- At conception the genetic code that determines humanness is already present.
- The heart, which begins beating as early as the 18th day, is by the third week beating regularly and sending an entirely independent blood supply through the little body.
- At 3 weeks, probably before the woman knows she is pregnant, the baby is 1/10 of an inch long. She or he possesses the beginnings of eyes, a spinal cord, a nervous system, a thyroid gland, lungs, a stomach, a liver, kidneys, intestines and a heart.
- At 6 weeks brain waves can be measured, the absence of which is used to determine death.
- At 45 days the baby's skeleton is complete in cartilage and the unborn child can make the first movements of it's arms and legs. It will be another 12 weeks before the mother can feel it.
- At 60 days the baby can grasp an object and make a fist.

2. What are the conclusions?

- The Bible tells us that life is in the blood (Genesis 9:4-6). Therefore, the unborn child with its own blood and circulatory system is a human life.
- The Bible tells us that the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). Therefore, as the unborn child is a human life, it has a spirit, it has a soul.
- When a baby is aborted, it is logical to conclude that it can suffer pain.

Do not be deceived. Developing within the mother is a human being, very much alive and made in the image of God. Man has worth because of who he is – man, made in God's image – and not because of what he might become. The worth is not determined by some man-made criterion.

It is true that the little unborn child is for all intents and purposes helpless. But the helpless and the poor deserve extra care, not abuse by the strong. The Bible teaches that a person has worth, dignity, and the right to life because he or she is a person, made in the image of God. It is clear that that also applies to the unborn child – very much a person according to God's Word.

F. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. Will the young woman who keeps herself from premarital sex ever need to think about becoming an unwed mother?

2. Does God have the authority to ordain among humans what is and what is not to be considered normal and natural affections?

3. Those in favor of abortion claim that a woman has the power to do anything with her body that she desires. Neglecting that there are actually two bodies involved, what implication is derived from 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20?

4. If an expectant mother does not have the financial ability, emotional stability, or the maturity to raise a child, what reasonable options other than abortion does she have?

5. Do you think an unborn baby has feelings? Do you think he is sensitive to discomfort?

6. What does it mean to be "begotten?"

7. Read what David writes in Psalm 12:3-5 about mistreating the poor and helpless. What application do these principles have for those who would destroy by abortion?

X. Immodest Appearance And Indecent Dress

A. Introduction

"What shall I wear?" is a question most people ask themselves nearly every morning as they prepare to go out into the world. Beyond style or fashion, the faithful Christian considers other more important issues:

1. Is it modest?
2. Is it decent?
3. Is it proper for those professing godliness?

Our challenge is to determine what constitutes modesty in a constantly changing society. For example, at one time, it was immodest for a woman to expose her ankles. Today, even the most modest dress would have been considered scandalous.

So the questions follow:

1. Should a Christian woman wear shorts, mini-skirts, low-cut blouses, tight skirts, or tight pants?
2. What about men? Should they be concerned about decency? Should they go about without their shirts?
3. What effect might decency have on certain activities, such as mixed swimming and other athletic sports?

As we ponder these questions, we will not propose some technical answer measurable with a ruler such as "no women's skirts higher than an inch above the knee." The Bible does not address the issue that way, so neither will we. Instead, we encourage prayerful consideration of what the Bible has to say, which provides basic principles and concepts that can help us discern between good and evil. God's word will be our standard on this. The world has an entirely different notion about what is right and proper for our attire.

At the outset, we need to establish that God does not have a double standard for men and women. What is decent and fitting for a man is also decent and fitting for a woman. However, we will find that most of the scriptures on this subject refer to decency for a woman. There is probably good reason for this. Men, by nature, are typically more visually stimulated than women. This is one reason pornography is usually more ensnaring to men than to women. The inspired writers may well be concentrating on the instructions for women to help counteract this tendency.

Let's begin by simply noting what the Bible says about nakedness.

B. It Is Shameful To Expose One's Nakedness

1. Consider the example of Adam and Eve

After they sinned, they made "coverings" for themselves:

Genesis 3:7-10

In the original Hebrew, the word "coverings" is from CHAGORAH, meaning a garment which covers the mid-section. This describes what most men typically wear at a public swimming pool. Note that, despite such coverings, they still felt naked!

The Lord made "tunics" for them:

Genesis 3:21

In the original Hebrew, the word "tunics" is from KETHONETH, a robe or coat-like garment commonly reaching from about the neck to the knees. Evidently, God was not satisfied with the brevity of the coverings they had made. Note how this word is used in the book of Exodus and its context:

Exodus 28:40-42

2. Consider general references to nakedness

Genesis 9:22, 23

Leviticus 18:6-19, 20:17-21

Nahum 3:5

Revelation 3:18

Though the Bible speaks of nakedness occasionally to denote defenselessness or destitution, the context is almost always associated with shame. The larger references to nakedness in Old Testament scripture speak of bodily indecency and improper behavior. Nakedness is cast in a favorable light only in respect to that exposure in private between husband and wife (Genesis 2:25).

3. Partial Nudity

It is shameful to expose or draw attention to private parts of the body. Exposure of such parts was often a form of judgment intended to shame the wicked.

Isaiah 3:16-17; 47:1-3

Paul alludes to the fact that some parts are "unpresentable" and thus should be covered.

1 Corinthians 12:23-24

At some point, then, there needs to be a line where it is a shame to cross, there are parts of the body that should remain private.

C. We Must Not Provide Opportunities For Fleshly Lusts

1. Provoking lust is clearly condemned in the scriptures.

Romans 13:13-14

Can the way we dress excite fleshly lusts? Consider the following:

- "An astonishingly great number of men are of the opinion that women are more attractive partly dressed than nude. They prefer to see women partially disrobed to the sight of complete nakedness." - Theodor Reik (Of Love And Lust).
- "Mini-clothes are symbolic of those girls who want to seduce a man..." - Mary Quant, London fashion designer and inventor of the miniskirt.
- When asked where it (miniskirts, etc.) was all leading, Mary Quant replied with one word: "Sex."
- During the hijacking of the Santa Maria in 1967, the women on board were concerned the rebels might have designs on them, so they left off wearing "enticing clothing"; i.e., they stopped appearing in shorts and halter-tops, and quit swimming in the ship's pool.

If the "women of the world" know what is capable of stimulating the lust of the flesh, why not the "daughters of God?"

2. Jesus warned about "committing adultery in the heart".

Matthew 5:27-30

There is a two-fold responsibility here.

- a. The man is responsible to guard his mind and eyes from impurity.

Philippians 4:8

Job 31:1

- b. The woman is responsible to help prevent the lewd stare.

Proverbs 7:6-27

2 Samuel 11:2

Though lust is inexcusable on the man's part, if the woman by her apparel or conduct has encouraged it, she shares in the guilt! We should note that God's law likewise prohibits a woman from looking at a man to lust after him, and the man also should dress and behave in a way to not evoke temptation. If the clothing we wear encourages the arousal of fleshly lusts in others, then we have clearly crossed the line. Of course, this requires honesty and objectivity on our part; we must be willing to be true to ourselves and to God.

3. Immediate family settings are not exempt.

Some folks are of the opinion that being ill-clad around close family members, such as among mothers, fathers, and older sons, daughters, brothers, and sisters together, is not indecency. There is no scriptural basis for this. Consider what happens to Noah after the flood (Genesis 9:20-25). Being drunk with wine, he loses his sense of shame and is naked in his tent. His youngest son, Ham, makes sport of him, but his two older sons, Shem and Japheth, cover their father's nakedness while discreetly looking away. Noah later proclaims a curse on Ham for his lack of discretion.

Consider also the accounts in the Bible involving incest:

- As among Lot with his daughters (Genesis 19:30-38),
- With Amnon raping his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13),
- And the fornicators within the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5).

Even among family members, the possibility of inciting lust is the same. Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters: cover yourselves with proper attire when you are together. Be examples for good to one another.

D. Appearance Consistent With Godliness

Thus far we have examined what the Bible says about nakedness and lust. The proper attire of a Christian goes beyond merely the exposure of skin. Consider this reading from the American Standard Version:

*1 Timothy 2:9, 10 In like manner, that women adorn themselves in **modest** apparel, with **shamefastness** and **sobriety**; not with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but (which becometh women professing godliness) through good works.*

1. Apparel

In verse 9, let's examine more carefully the three words shown above in bold:

"Modest" [KOSMIO]

From whence the English word "cosmetic" is derived, this word is defined as follows:

- "Orderly, well arranged, decent, modest" (akin to kosmos, in its primary sense as "harmonious arrangement adornment"; cf. kosmos, of the world, which is related to kosmos in its secondary sense as the world) - Vine's Expository Dictionary.
- "The well-ordering is not of dress and demeanor only, but of the inner life, uttering in deed and expressing itself in the outward conversation" - Trench.
- "Well-arranged, seemly, modest; of a man living with decorum" - J. H. Thayer.

This word applies not so much to scanty clothing but to inappropriate or gaudy clothing. This touches on clothing that is not suitable for the occasion as society or culture would expect; such clothing would attract undue attention. The modest Christian does not go to a funeral or worship services dressed like they are going to a picnic. Likewise, they do not dress at a picnic like they're going to a banquet.

"Shamefastness" [AIDOS]

Translated "shamefacedness" in the KJV, this word is defined as follows:

- "A sense of shame, modesty, is used regarding the demeanor of women in the church" - W. E. Vine's Expository Dictionary.
- "A sense of shame or honour, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect" - J. H. Thayer.
- "AIDOS would always restrain a good man from an unworthy act" - Trench.

It suggests the ability to blush. This word applies more to the issue of scanty clothing; those who display their bodies so as to excite lust in others have not the quality of "shamefacedness." The faithful Christian takes into consideration the effect their apparel has on others.

It is a well-known fact that men like to look lustfully at women's legs; it's the subject of many popular songs. Young ladies, if you are wearing in public the typical women's swimsuit, there is no portion of your legs that you are not exposing to their view. As men look and lust (and they will!) you have enticed them to do so and are equally guilty of sin.

"Sobriety" [SOPHROSUNE]

Translated "discreetly" in the NAS, this word is defined as follows:

- "Denotes soundness of mind" – Vine.
- "It is that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires, which would hinder the temptation to these from arising..." – Trench.

The NKJ translates this "moderation," which suggests that one does not go to extremes in any regards. Though this is not the best term for SOPHROSUNE, someone of a sound mind will certainly recognize the limits of good taste.

2. Adornment

Go back to 1 Timothy 2 and look at verse 10. He is building on a point concerning the appearance that draws undue attention to one's self. An attitude that is full of self will dress in such a way that says, "Hey, look at me!" This includes:

- Girls with too much make-up. Make-up worn discreetly is not the first thing you notice when you see a face.
- Girls who work for hours on making their hair look right. How much comparative time is used in Bible study?
- Guys with muscle shirts or no shirt at all to show off their physique.

The apostle is not altogether condemning the wearing of jewelry or fixing the hair. Excess, rather than actual adornment, is what is being condemned here. Compare these passages:

Isaiah 3:16-26

Ezekiel 16:10-14

1 Timothy 2:10 is an example of elliptical speech found frequently in the Bible. It condemns one thing to the exclusion of another; it is "not only this but also that" terminology. Note these examples (words in brackets are added to convey the meaning):

John 6:27 ...not labor [ONLY] for the food which perishes, but [ALSO] for the food which endures.

1 Corinthians 1:17 ...did not send me to baptize [ONLY], but to preach the gospel [ALSO].

1 Timothy 2:10 ...not [ONLY] with braided hair, and gold or pearls or costly raiment; but... [ALSO] through good works.

Outward adornment is not wrong absolutely, but in comparison to the adorning of the inner person by good works, it is to be of lower priority and lesser importance. That which is "proper for women professing godliness" is that which is fitting, seemly, suitable, and becoming. A woman professing to be godly would never knowingly adorn herself in a way that excites lust in another person or attracts undue attention to herself.

Ephesians 5:3

Titus 2:2-7

1 Peter 3:1-6

Regardless how unfair we may think it is, our appearance will affect our influence. If we appear in a well-arranged demeanor, others will be more likely to respect us when we try to teach them the gospel. If we appear disorderly, we will be prejudged by others as unworthy and disregarded. The apostle Paul would have never done anything to thus mislead others.

1 Corinthians 8:13

Romans 14:21

When a person disregards the effect their appearance may have on others, it cannot be said they are adorned with a gentle and quiet spirit.

E. Modesty And Decency In Application

From our study so far, we see that "modesty" and "decency" are quite different. "Modesty" pertains to attire which is suitable and proper for the occasion. That which is appropriate will vary depending on culture, traditions, or the situation itself. Social norms will determine what is appropriate, and it might change over time. For example, dressing a certain way at one time, for one setting, and in one country is not necessarily fitting for every other time, setting, or country, even though the attire might not be wrong in itself. In contrast, "decency" pertains to attire which would tempt others to lust. That which encourages lust will encourage lust no matter the circumstance, times, or place in

which a person lives. A type of thinking called "situational ethics" was born in the 1960s which proposes that in certain circumstances divine moral principles can be set aside. The faithful Christian recognizes that God's standards never change.

God's word is clear about indecent clothing, though the Bible instruction is based on principle and concept. God leaves it up to us to make the proper application before we dress and go out of our house into public every day. The world has a different standard of decency, but many young Christians, instead of steering clear of worldliness, will try to get as close as possible to looking like people in the world.

1 Peter 2:11, 12

If Christians do not look different in dress from most anyone else in the world with no regard for godliness, they are obviously not behaving in a godly manner themselves.

Romans 12:1, 2

1. Excuses

Let's examine some excuses young Christians sometimes give for dressing indecently.

a. "In old times, a woman even showing ankles was considered lewd, so it's really all just relative."

We are not living in old times. God's law requires us to dress in two ways: (1) appropriately, as our current culture dictates and (2) decently, as to not induce lust. If our current culture suggests that ankle exposure is lewd, then the faithful Christian will not do it, regardless of whether it is really lewd or not. On the other hand, appearance that causes lust is the same regardless of culture.

b. "Some cultures, for example in Europe, are more open about their bodies, so there, nudity is okay."

They're not as open as they think, or they would not make such a big deal of their nude beaches and parks when Westerners come to visit. It is not that they are less "up-tight" but that they have lower moral standards.

c. "It depends on the situation. If everyone else around is dressed scantily, it's okay."

Here is situation ethics again. The fact is, young ladies, you should hear how men talk to each other about what they see at the beach and swimming pools.

d. "It depends on the activity. If it's some athletic completion or hard work, you can't expect full clothing."

There's an interesting statement found in John 21:3-8. Here, men are at work in a fishing boat. They are out at sea some distance from shore. Being in a private setting, Peter was naked (KJV), that is, stripped for work (NAS). The original word here [GUNMOS] according to Thayer includes "ill clad, clad in undergarments only (the outer garments or cloak being laid aside)." That sounds like what most people wear at the public pools. However, notice that before Peter jumps into the water to swim to Jesus, he **puts on** his regular clothes so he will be decently covered when he reaches the shore.

e. "I'll be cooler and more comfortable."

Does God have as much concern for your comfort as He does your sin? Besides, you can be cool enough in decent apparel.

f. "Everybody is dressing in this style now."

We have long ago established that what others do is not our standard. Besides, if dressing decently requires custom-made clothes, then that is what we will do.

Philippians 2:15

2. Guidelines

Before you dress, consider these guidelines based on biblical principles:

- Prayerfully consider whether your adornment in any circumstance reflects your profession of godliness and the principles found in God's word.
- Seek counsel from those who are mature in the faith, whose senses have been exercised to discern good and evil (Hebrews 5:14)

- Girls, if a part of your body is exposed for view that would make you uncomfortable for guys to touch, perhaps you should not be showing it to them.
- If it doesn't cover enough, if it is too sheer, or if it is skin-tight to show your form in detail, it is indecent.

F. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. What is the difference between "modesty" and "decency?"
2. Some men will lust after a woman no matter what she wears, so in this case, does it really matter what she wears?"
3. Is it wrong to care about looking good for others, either to be pleasing to the eye or to be attractive to the opposite sex? If not, can it become wrong? If so, how?
4. Are there certain circumstances, such as athletic activities, when God's standard of decency is altered?
5. List two or three different examples of ways in which clothing can be indecent.
6. List two or three different examples of ways in which clothing can be immodest.

XI. Inappropriate Dancing

A. Introduction

When you become a Christian, everything takes on a new perspective.

2 Corinthians 5:17

The mature Christian considers what the Bible has to say about every activity in life and conforms to it. This is not as easy for young Christians and teenagers who are easily lead by popular trends or typical behavior among their peers.

Dancing is one of those activities to which a Christian needs to give serious thought. Questions will naturally arise:

- What exactly is dancing?
- Is anything wrong with dancing?
- Are certain kinds of dancing acceptable to God?
- Is all dancing sinful?
- Should I attend a dance?

We will try to answer these concerns as logically and scripturally as possible. We will also be frank and open about what will prove to be a somewhat sensitive subject. It is not our goal to shock or embarrass anyone, but we need to be clear and direct about what the Bible calls sin.

You may have heard sermons about this subject with all kinds of reasoning on the matter. For this study, our approach will be the same as for all issues in Christian morality. This lesson will clearly state the subject at hand, present Bible principles at play, and challenge the reader to make the proper spiritual application in daily life. Human reasoning, conjecture, prejudice, and stereotyping should not be allowed to cloud our thinking on the matter.

B. What Is Dancing?

According to Merriam-Webster, the noun and verb forms of "dance" are "a series of rhythmic and patterned bodily movements usually performed to music; to move or seem to move up and down or about in a quick or lively manner." That covers a pretty broad range of activities. With a definition this general, dancing could include:

- Children playing leap-frog or musical chairs
- Ice skating and roller skating
- Gymnastics and other athletic activities
- Aerobic exercise routines
- Square dancing and line dancing
- Ethnic dances, such as clogging or polka
- Ballroom dancing, such as a waltz or tango
- Modern dance, such as the twist or the jitterbug
- Theatrical dancing, such as choreography, ballet, or tap dancing

Like painting, sculpture, or music, dancing has become an art form used for the expression of feelings and emotions. Cultures and societies have used dance to express joy, jubilation, and victory. It has been used to arouse people both to love and to war or to seek the favor of gods. It is even sometimes used for mere entertainment and exercise.

These things are not sinful on their own (with the exception of seeking to please a false god). There is nothing wrong with expressing your feelings, having fun, or exercising in a number of different ways. We would have no scriptural basis to make a blanket statement that all or a certain kind of dancing as listed above is wrong in every circumstance. Our study will ultimately show that any sinfulness of dancing will be derived not from a specific scriptural decree for the prohibition of dancing in some form but on the basis of the principles of godliness.

Let's turn our attention now to the Bible.

C. Dancing In The Bible

The Bible makes several specific references to dancing and some indications of dance-like behavior. We'll take a look at some of these now.

Exodus 15:20

At the defeat of the Egyptians, Miriam and the women dance and play timbrels while praising God.

Exodus 32:19-25

When Aaron makes the golden calf, the people dance around it with a lack of self control.

Judges 21:21-23

Dances were used in ancient marriage rituals.

2 Samuel 6:14

David dances in worship at the return of the Ark Of The Covenant

Psalms 149, 150

Dance in worship is prescribed.

Ecclesiastes 3:4

There is a time to dance.

Matthew 11:16, 17

Jesus makes an application from the dances of little children at play.

Mark 6:22-25

The dancing of Herodius' daughter was so provocative, Herod makes a rash and tragic vow.

Acts 3:8; 14:10

When healed, those who once were lame went about leaping and rejoicing.

Our observation of the references sited in scripture shows us that sometimes dancing is associated with wholesomeness and sometimes it is associated with wickedness. Note the distinction:

In wholesomeness:

- Dancing is seen in the Bible as sometimes a means of expressing joy or simply having fun.
- Dancing is seen in Old Testament worship and praise to God.

In wickedness:

- Dancing is seen in the Bible as sometimes a part of uncontrolled behavior, as in the idolatry in Exodus 32.
- Dancing is seen as being provocative and a part of vileness and deceit, as when Herod lost his composure through the compelling dances of the girl in Mark 6.

So how are we to know when dancing is sinful? For this answer, let's turn again to biblical instruction concerning lust.

D. The Sin Of Lasciviousness

In our study of morality, we have many times used the works of the flesh as a starting point. Let's review:

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Once again, we focus on the word "lasciviousness." It's a big word and not one you hear on the radio every day. We've considered its meaning before; let's look a little deeper. The original word in Greek is ASELGEIA and is translated as follows in Galatians 5:

- "lewdness" (New King James)
- "sensuality" (New American Standard)
- "debauchery" (New International)
- "licentiousness" (Revised Standard)
- "lasciviousness" (King James)

Literally meaning "without restraint," J. H. Thayer defines this as unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence, and continues to describe it as "wanton acts or manners as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc." Moreover, English synonyms are as follows:

- Lustful = "usually intense or unbridled sexual desire"
- Lewd = "sexually unchaste or licentious"
- Licentious = "lacking legal or moral restraints; especially disregarding sexual restraints"

Lasciviousness is condemned in scripture as that which defiles a man.

Mark 7:21-23

1 Peter 4:2, 3

Anything which excites the lust of the flesh whether by words, bodily movements, or unchaste touching is therefore considered sinful.

Note that, by definition, the sin of lasciviousness would condemn any form of dancing that would involve either of these two characteristics:

1. Indecent bodily movements

Lasciviousness is applicable to any form of dance that, outside the bonds of marriage, would provoke lustful thoughts by bodily movements. This will include any dancing that draws visual attention to those body parts pertaining to sexuality. This condemns the typical popular fast dance that involves swirling and gyrating the hips, buttocks, and pelvis and shaking the breasts.

2. Unchaste handling of males and females

Lasciviousness is applicable to any form of dance that, outside the bonds of marriage, would involve touching body areas that are sensitive to sexual stimulation. This will include any dancing that brings couples too close or touching in full frontal contact. This condemns the typical popular slow dance that involves a full body embrace for long time with swaying and rubbing the bodies together.

These are basically the very kinds of modern dancing that are typically engaged at many high school proms, sock hops, holiday parties, discotheques, and nightspots. The sin of lasciviousness rules out this kind of dancing, and the faithful Christian will not participate.

Lasciviousness enters into not only popular modern nightclub dancing but can actually enter any of the styles or forms of dancing previously listed. For example, the hokey pokey of childhood games is innocent enough when a foot, elbow, or head-bone is the body part "shaken all about." When the dance calls for the "tail-bone" to be shaken all about, it crosses the line. We may think it's cute and harmless for children to do this, but we are effectively teaching them this kind of bodily movement in dance is okay for them when they get older.

Dancing can send a very powerful message and hold a strong influence upon us. We have seen in scripture where dancing aided the loss of self-control, lowered inhibitions, and resulted in irreverent behavior (Exodus 32:25). Scripture has also shown us that dancing can cloud our thinking and provoke us to do things we would not normally do if we were not otherwise distracted by desires of the flesh (Mark 6:22). It is very easy for young couples struggling to remain pure while unmarried to engage in unlawful sexual activity after being so strongly stimulated with dance.

E. The Sin Of Lust

Though we may not actively participate in lascivious dancing, we may still sin by watching others do so. This is lust. In the original New Testament language, the word is EPITHUMIA and defined by Thayer as desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden, lust. Lust is a passive sin: just a look and an unlawful, unwholesome desire. The problem is that lust, unchecked, will always look for a way to move into action, fulfilling the unlawful desire.

The arousal of lust within us is clearly condemned in scripture. Be certain of this: if scripture condemns it, it is sin:

Matthew 5:28

Romans 13:13, 14

Galatians 5:16

Ephesians 2:2, 3

2 Timothy 2:22

Titus 2:12

F. Guilt By Participation Or By Association

The question usually comes to a high school teenager: "Should I go to the prom?" This question has effectively already been answered. What are you going to do at the prom? If you will go to engage in dancing that our study has shown causes lust, you will sin. If you will go and watch others dancing lustfully, you will sin.

Granted, all such events have different situations. Perhaps the event includes a dinner and a time for conversation. These are certainly wholesome activities. Perhaps also when the dancing occurs, the setting will allow you to distance yourself from it. On the other hand, maybe not. If inappropriate dancing is basically all that is going on and you are surrounded by it, you need to ask yourself what you're doing there.

The Christian life is lived in the middle of a sinful society; sin is all around us every day. We can simply walk down the street in public and be among people cursing, drinking, and dressing immodestly. We would have to live as hermits to avoid all such association. However, know that there is a difference between incidental association and deliberately and unnecessarily placing yourself in the midst of sinful activity.

For a similar example, I may go to a restaurant that serves liquor. However, the establishment not only serves liquor but also food, and not everyone there is drinking. No one will doubt my conviction as a Christian if I eat there, even though some around me are drinking. Conversely, consider going to a bar where basically all they serve is liquor and people are there for that purpose alone. A faithful Christian would be out of place there, even if he abstained from drinking.

Though we cannot control what other people around us are doing, God still calls us to be an example.

Philippians 2:15

G. Acceptable Dancing

So are there any kinds of modern dances that are acceptable for Christians? The answer is a simple and qualified "yes:" any dance that does not involve lasciviousness or any other enticement to sin. This would include the following:

- Dancing in privacy that arouses sexual desire between lawfully married couples,
- Dancing that involves steps and turns without lewd movement, unchaste touching, or indecent exposure,
- Dancing that involves arm and head motions that do not cause lust,
- Dancing for physical exercise that does not involve licentious behavior.

This may include a good number of modern dance forms, such as clogging, line dancing, square dancing, polka, gymnastics, and some ballroom dances. However, before casting yourself into these activities, consider these dangers:

1. Dangers and pitfalls

Dancing often presents a temptation for inappropriate dress. For example ballet and gymnastics are typically performed today wearing apparel that is indecent due to tightness to reveal detail of bodily form or scantiness to be inadequately covered. Take the moral stand that, if you choose to become involved in these art forms that are otherwise not lascivious, you will always do so dressed decently as a Christian should.

Dancing that only involves harmless stepping with innocent arm and head movements is perhaps safe enough when engaged only with diligent Christians. However, for example, consider what can happen if engaged in otherwise clean line dancing with others not so diligent. It takes only a little extra bodily movement for them to turn it into something lustful, and then, there you are in the middle of it. Be careful not to set yourself up for a bad situation.

Some ballroom dances are not lustful in nature. The waltz, for example, performed with discretion, is such an example. However, if dancing with someone other than your spouse, it so very easily becomes more than you bargain for, if the stance becomes too close or the hand position becomes too familiar. If you cannot keep this in propriety, it can become sin in an instant. It would be better to stay away from needless temptation. The rumba, on the other hand, is one of the most sexually provocative dances; there's no wholesome way to perform it except by a lawfully married couple in private.

H. Excuses Used To Justify Lewd Dancing

1. "Dancing may arouse other people, but I don't react that way."

Someone may say this to justify going to a dance just to watch. To begin, the sincerity of such a statement could be legitimately called into question. We need to be completely honest with ourselves. Do not deceive yourself into thinking you are so strong morally that immoral behavior does not affect you. The very fact that it doesn't indicates a

problem. Even if you are not caused to lust when watching lewd dancing, you're watching others sin, and that should bother you. If you derive any enjoyment from the sins of others, you have sinned, yourself.

Romans 1:32

2. "I can't control what other people think."

This demonstrates a selfish and inconsiderate attitude that always assumes the problem is someone else's. Just because we can't force a person to think right, that is no reason to encourage them to think wrong. We have a responsibility not to contribute to another's moral corruption; we must not be a stumbling block.

Matthew 18:6, 7

3. "Nothing is wrong with it if it is closely supervised and done in moderation."

Sin supervised is still sin; sin does not become less sinful if regulated. God does not make allowances for us to sin with moderation. Can we practice sin as long as we don't go overboard? This is absurd.

4. "Dancing to me is just a way of getting good exercise."

If you wish to dance for exercise, it is completely possible to do so without lewdness. There are many alternative forms of exercise that do not excite the lusts of the flesh in yourself or others.

5. "Dancing is approved in scripture."

You will never find lasciviousness and fleshly lust approved in scripture. When Jephthah returned home from war, his daughter met him dancing for joy. The text would suggest the dance she performed was neither lewd or lustful. This is the kind of dancing approved in scripture.

Judges 11:34

6. "Everyone does it."

From the outset, we established that what everyone else in world is doing is not our standard for moral behavior. Those of us claiming to be godly will take a stand against lewd dancing, even if it makes us appear to be oddballs of society.

I. Conclusion

We can be sure of two things concerning lust:

- It is wrong to have fleshly lusts in our hearts.
- It is wrong to conduct ourselves in any way as to excite fleshly lusts in others.

We can be sure of two things concerning lewd dancing:

- Observing it causes fleshly lust in our hearts.
- Performing it excites fleshly lusts in others.

The conclusion is obvious: lewd dancing is sinful.

Dancing is as natural a behavior as walking and talking. In fact, a small child who is not yet even able to speak or walk on his own will twitch his legs and wave his arms when he hears music. This does not justify lascivious behavior. God always expects us to keep all natural urges under control and gives us legitimate and wholesome outlets for them all.

J. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. What is lasciviousness?
2. What two aspects of the meaning of lasciviousness apply directly to some dancing today?
3. Is all dancing sinful in all circumstances? List some dances in circumstances that do not involve sin. Explain why.

4. Is all dancing appropriate behavior for Christians in all circumstances? List some dances in circumstances that do involve sin. Explain why.

5. What were two occasions in scripture where dancing influenced people to do wrong? What were the motivating influences in each case?

6. Though not involved in lewd dancing himself, what is the danger for a Christian to simply watch others dance lewdly?

7. Do you think a Christian should attend a high school prom? Explain your response.

8. What possible dangers are there in participating in wholesome dancing?

XII. Media Influences

A. Introduction

There is a tendency to over-generalize on certain subjects. As a result of that, we sometimes condemn things that should not be condemned. When this happens, those who are convinced that there is no wrong in the activities wrongfully condemned react by rejecting everything else stated in the in condemnation. This lesson seeks to balance that danger.

For example, all popular music is not bad or immoral; all movies are not sinful, neither are all television shows. Preachers ought not be preaching that all rock music or all rap music is bad; it's not. However, the hearers ought not reject everything else stated by a preacher who would so teach, because some of rock and rap music certainly is bad, and Christians should pay attention to the dangers. We need to be warned about these dangers, but there is no scriptural basis for placing a blanket condemnation on all of a certain style of music.

This lesson will largely become a review of our past study topics in morality with an emphasis on everyday application. The topics we have considered include the following:

- Honesty And Lying
- Gambling
- Prejudice
- Bad Language
- Smoking
- Drinking And Drug Abuse
- Pre-marital Sex
- Abortion
- Immodest Appearance And Indecent Dress
- Inappropriate Dancing

The children's Sunday school song goes, "Be careful little eyes what you see,... be careful little ears what you hear." What we learn from that song when we were children comes into direct application as we enter adulthood. The simple truths we might have learned as children should not be disregarded as we mature. We will never out-grow this instruction.

B. The Power Of Suggestion

The effect that others can have over our minds is incredible. Things we hear and things we watch play an important part in our lives. We hear of murder and rape, crime and corruption, sin and unrighteousness. Seldom do we hear good news. That is one reason that each Christian should spend time with God in study of His word.

The faithful Christian works to live a life which is morally pure. However, we are constantly bombarded by the media today through books, radio, television, movies, and the Internet with things not consistent with a life of purity. Much of what is published today either depicts or glorifies ungodly living. These things have an influence on us, whether or not we are aware of it. We should ask whether a can Christian fill his mind with ungodly messages and examples and not be affected.

Examine these passages which warn of the dangers of evil influences:

Exodus 34:12

Numbers 33:55

Psalms 1:1

Let's consider two examples of men weakened by evil associations:

1. The example of Lot

- Lot chose to live in a wicked city (Genesis 13:12, 13).
- Lot and his family were immersed in a sexually immoral society (Genesis 19: 5-7).

- Lot eventually fell victim to sexual immorality, no doubt through the influence of living in Sodom (Genesis 19:30-36).

2. The example of Peter

- Peter removed himself from Jesus and associated himself with unbelievers (Luke 22:54, 55).
- There, he was comfortable denying Christ (Luke 22:56-60).
- To keep up his act among them, he even began cursing and swearing (Mark 14:71).

It is doubtful that Peter would have done those things if he had been in the company of other disciples or with Christ.

C. A Matter Of Principles

1. Think On These Things

In Philippians 4:8, the apostle Paul says to "meditate on these things."

- Whatever things are **True**
- Whatever things are **Honest**
- Whatever things are **Just**
- Whatever things are **Pure**
- Whatever things are **Lovely**
- Whatever things are **Reputable**

The original word here translated "meditate" in NKJV is of the same root form as our English word "logic." The meditation implied here is not unconscious mind wanderings but, as J. H. Thayer would describe it, a computing or calculating, as an accountant would do, or a taking the weight of all the reasons.

2. Keep Your Mind Pure

We are admonished to expel immoral thoughts from our hearts and maintain pure ones.

Proverbs 4:23

Proverbs 23:7

Matthew 5:8

Let's note some ways that our minds can become polluted with filth and the violation of God's will rather than being of pure mind as the Lord desires.

D. The Media and Morality

1. Music

Since the 1960's, broadcasting regulations have become relaxed regarding the content of popular music. Much of popular music today is not in harmony with a life of godliness. In particular, the lyrics of many popular songs have off-color references to sexual activity and drunkenness.

Through the years, some preachers have railed on modern American and British rock-and-roll music as being immoral in general. Actually, there is immoral content in the lyrics of almost all music types, not just rock music. Modern American country music, for example, contains frequent glorification of adultery and drunkenness and the trivialization of divorce. Through the years as popular music has become more diverse, there's hardly any style of music today that does not have some immoral content.

Video technology introduced a new media for music in the 1980's: music videos. Many popular videos include nudity, murder, blood, sex, adultery, rebellion, violence, and other similar immoralities. Video technology also gave rise to a new music form that came to the mainstream in the early 1990's: rap music, a musical form characterized by lyrics rhythmically spoken rather than sung. Though some rap music is of wholesome content, some of it is not.

The mature Christian will regulate the music he chooses to listen to. Do not think you can exposure yourself to ungodliness in the music you listen to without restraint and not be affected by its influence.

2. Movies

A prominent theme of modern movies seems to be illicit sex and murder. There are few movies anymore which even worldly standards would not recommend at least parental guidance for children to watch.

3. Television

The little screen is just as bad or worse than the big screen. The most popular shows are those which expose the most skin. Situation comedies are often designed to desensitize viewers to homosexuality. People with religious convictions in television shows are almost always portrayed as being ignorant. We need to learn to shut off the television when worthless shows are presented.

The televised halftime show during the 2004 Super Bowl football game generated a lot of controversy when a female performer exposed her breast. Before this occurred, the show was filled with lewd dancing and indecent behavior. A Christian sensitive to his needless exposure to immorality would have turned off that program well before the incident.

4. Pornography

Magazines, books, and even some newspapers become best-sellers depending on how unrighteous, sinful, and sexually explicit they are. Moreover, pornography is largely an exploitation of women. A Christian should never read or look at this type of literature. Besides, looking at lewd images and lusting is clearly condemned in scripture. It is the fulfillment of fleshly desire in its basest form.

Psalm 119:37

Psalm 101:3

Matthew 5:28

Ephesians 5:3-12

Viewing pornography is a source of excitement to many people similar to gambling. Researchers believe that such intense excitement can release chemicals called "endorphins" within the body which have a drug-like effect and produce a feeling of well-being. This psychological exhilaration keeps the viewer coming back for more and more viewing. However, this is no excuse for pursuing fleshly desires; God calls us to self control.

Acts 24:25

2 Peter 1:5, 6

The best advice for breaking a bad habit is to develop new, good habits to replace the bad ones. Stopping the use of pornography will only be achievable if it is replaced with other wholesome activities to capture one's time and attention. Find ways to purposefully divert yourself away from this thing as necessary. It is a major waste of precious time.

Titus 2:12-14

1 Peter 4:1-3

5. The Internet

Trade in pornographic materials on the Internet is a booming business. Note the following facts (taken from an article which appeared in USA Today, 1/29/99):

- There are 16 million Internet users in the USA under the age of 17.
- There are upwards of 20,000 to 30,000 pornographic sites in the USA, grossing \$700 million to \$1 billion/year (Forrester Research, Mark Hardie, senior analyst).
- Of the 56.8 million individuals on the Web as of December, 1998, 32.3% visited pornographic sites (according to Media Metrix, an organization which tracks consumer traffic on the World Wide Web).
- While it is a crime to provide pornographic materials to a minor, many of these Internet sites have pornographic images on their opening screens.

There is also much concern today in certain locations about the ill effects associated with the legalization of gambling, but it is already here - in the form of virtual casinos on the Internet open 24 hours a day! Many people today are hooked on the gambling addiction, robbing themselves, their families, and the Lord of resources that could be spent on worthwhile things. Now, the Internet puts this temptation right in the convenience of your own home, outside the jurisdiction of local gaming ordinances.

1 Thessalonians 4:11,12

Consider the dangers of gossiping. The Internet permits rapid dissemination of information: accurate or inaccurate, beneficial or hurtful. Gossip works in much the same fashion as a nuclear explosion or the transfer of disease. The spread of malicious tales is aided by the tendency of people to believe almost anything they read. Some people find it easier to lie about others if they can write it in an e-mail or say it into a telephone receiver rather than say it to someone's face.

1 Timothy 5:13

Convenience has always been one of Satan's most useful tools. He is an opportunist, always looking for ways to make it easier for us to sin.

1 Corinthians 2:11

E. Getting Practical

The truth is, we who try to live in a godly manner live in a sinful world. There is a little bit of bad in almost everything good in the world. For a Christian to remove from his life all exposure to the sinful behavior of others, he would have to effectively live a life in seclusion, surrounded perhaps by only his family and Christian friends. Then, how could we ever take the gospel to others, or how could the world ever see Christ living in us?

Philippians 2:15

Romans 12:1, 2

Living in the world but not of the world will require us to make some choices. Sometimes exposure to the sinful behavior of others is unavoidable; sometimes it is necessary in order for the world to see the difference Christ has made in our lives. However, sometimes we need to walk away from and completely avoid that which is unclean in this world.

1 John 2:15-17

2 Corinthians 6:17

It may be difficult to always know when enough is enough, but by increasing our knowledge of God's word and making a point to take notice of our situations, we will be more likely to do the right thing.

F. Thoughts And Questions For Discussion

1. Have you ever yawned because you saw or heard someone else yawn? What does this say about the influence others can have upon us by what we see them do or hear them say?
2. In computer programming an expression is used: "garbage in, garbage out." The meaning is that any computation using corrupted data will only result in corrupted answers. Explain how this principle applies to what information we put into our minds.
3. What are the comparable percentages of minutes per day that you spend on the telephone, watching TV, going to the movies, browsing the Internet, doing homework, doing household chores, and reading the Bible? Consider actually making note of the time spent and calculating the comparisons. How would your time spent on the most important things compare to the others?
4. For another test of exposure, if you are one to watch TV, select a show and make a written note of each time an ungodly reference is made, whether it be to homosexual desensitization, unlawful sexual activity, indecency, foul language, lying, gossip, murder, rape, drunkenness, or any other immoral behavior. Observe carefully; it may be happening more often than you are consciously aware.
5. What is the best way to break old habits?
6. Read the parable of the soils in Matthew 13:3-9 and its explanation in verses 18 - 23. What application of the seed falling among thorns can be made to our study of media influences?

7. Read the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13:24-30 and its explanation in verses 36 - 43. What application of the tares growing among wheat can be made to our study of media influences?

8. Does the parable of the seed among the thorns contradict the parable of the wheat among the tares? Explain the difference and its application to our study of media influences.