

***Introduction to Christian Ethics Part 2***  
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for  
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***Unit #2 – Marital and Sexual Issues***

We come now to the last of the marital and sexual issues that we will be examining in this course.

**What is Forbidden Sexually, and What is Not.**

- I have never known a Bible teacher to cover this subject in a comprehensive way.
- We understand that Biblical sexual standards of right and wrong come to us as expressions of God's will.
- They are not just human conventions or cultural practices.
- Heterosexual marriage is God's only plan for pure, guilt-free sexual intimacy.
- When God brought Adam and Eve together they were naked and unashamed (Gen 2:25) because that was what God intended.
- Within marriage, nothing of a sexual nature is forbidden in Christian ethics.
- The only limitations or restrictions that apply to intimacy within marriage are limitations that arise out of the need for intimacy to be mutually kind, considerate and loving.
- In addition, 1 Cor 7 teaches that husbands and wives are not to deny or deprive each other sexually.
- God wants them to be there for each other sexually.
  
- History and observation demonstrate that many people do not accept God's plan for their sexual fulfillment in marriage.
- They have invented many distortions or perversions of their sexual natures that involve deviating from what God provided for our first parents and intended for us.
- Paul speaks very plainly about some of the sexual deviations or sins invented by mankind in **1 Cor 6:9, 11f [READ]**.
- Paul begins with a general word *<pornoi>*, which includes virtually every type of sexual immorality, rather than one specific type of sin.
- Then he names four specific types of sexual deviancy or sin that deserve special mention, possibly because of how commonly they were and still are practiced.
- Paul states plainly that individuals who practice such behaviours as these will not inherit the kingdom of God, unless they are changed, washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus.
- In other words they will be excluded from the blessings of living under God's authority.
- You may wonder why idolatry is mentioned in this list along with several types of

sexual deviancy.

- The answer is found in the nature of idol worship as it was practiced in those days.
- Back then, idol worship typically involved having sexual intimacy with a male or female temple slave who was believed to be indwelt by the god being worshipped, the god who owned the slave body and soul.
- Supposedly sexual intercourse with a slave owned by a god brought the worshipper into close fellowship with the god.
- It was regarded as a form of worship.
- This degrading and immoral practice was an integral part of idolatrous worship as it was practiced in ancient times.
- When even religion corrupts and debases people, they are about as low as they can get, ethically speaking
- What Paul is saying is that calling sexual immorality worship does not make it any less repugnant to God.
- Individuals whose religious beliefs and practices involve them in sexual sin will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- Next Paul specifically mentions the sin committed by *adulterers*.

- Adultery involves intimacy between individuals, at least one of whom is married to someone else, a partner to whom the *adulterer* is being unfaithful.
- In the Old Testament both parties to adultery were to be put to death (Dt 22:22-24).
- We are not required to apply this judgment, but it clearly indicates God's attitude toward unrepentant, unforgiven adulterers.
- *Adulterers* will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- Paul next refers to *prostitutes*, people who provide sex for pay.

- This too is repugnant to God, and it denies the God given significance of sexual intimacy by implying that it has no lasting meaning or significance beyond the pleasure of the moment.
- God intended sexual intimacy to be immensely significant, forming an exclusive and life-long bond.
- Emptying the act of the meaning assigned to it by God is unacceptable to Him.
- Prostitutes will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- Calling them sex-trade workers and leaglizing their profession will not make their behaviour acceptable to God.

- Next Paul mentions two specific types of *homosexual offenders*.

- Homosexual sex was very commonly practiced in Greek and Roman society in New Testament times and was not thought of as particularly dishonourable or immoral.
- Obviously it had a lot in common with Western culture in our day.
- Paul clearly states that homosexual offenders will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- The first type of homosexual offender Paul mentions here <*malakoi*> is translated in many translations as *homosexual prostitutes*, but that is not really what the Greek word means.
  - The correct English word for this Greek word is one that you may never have heard before; it is the word *catamite*.
  - A catamite is a man or a boy who allows another male to use his body sexually in a passive way.
  - There wasn't necessarily any exchange of money involved in such behaviour, so the word *prostitute* is quite misleading as a translation.
  - Among the Greeks *catamites* were often involved in a consensual sexual relationship without any sort of payment for services rendered.
  - These relationships typically included romantic feelings and professions of love and loyalty on both sides.
  - A lot of ancient Greek love poetry described and endorsed romantic and sexual affection between male homosexual lovers.
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- The other type of homosexual sinner mentioned here by Paul is the male homosexual user or sodomite <*arsenokoitai*> who uses the catamite sexually.
  - Professions of love, affection and loyalty did not make the behaviours of such offenders or of catamites any less repugnant to God.
  - In our day, individuals involved in homosexual sex often defend their behaviour by stating that the Bible condemns homosexual prostitution only, and not loving, faithful homosexual relationships.
  - This view of homosexual relationships is commonly accepted and endorsed in the United Church of Canada, and in the Liberal wing of the Anglican church, as well as in some other communions.
  - Paul's language here gives no support to the claim that it is only homosexual intimacy for pay that displeases God.
  - Under the Law of Moses, homosexual sex was punishable by death as were a large number of offences.
  - This tells us nothing about the offences for which our laws should apply the death penalty today.
  - Instead, what it tells us is how God regards such behaviours.
  - The roles of passive catamite and the active homosexual user are not necessarily separate and distinct.
  - There can be a voluntary interchanging of roles so that both participants are both user and used.
  - The clearest single New Testament passage dealing with homosexual intimacy involving men or women is found in **Romans 1:18-27** **[READ]** (Cf 1 Tim 1:10; 2 Pe 2:6f, Jude 7)

- There are quite a few other forms of sexual sin that Paul does not specifically mention by name in 1 Cor 6:9.
- They are included in the meaning of the general Greek word he uses for sexual sinners.
- That word <*pornoi*> includes both the specific sexual sins that Paul names, and others that he does not name, although most of them are mentioned elsewhere in scripture.
- New Testament ethical teaching differs from the teaching of the Law in many respects, but it is very consistent with the teachings of the Law where sexual sin is concerned.
- Sexual offences that are spoken about in detail in the Law are viewed in much the same way in the New Testament Church.
  
- For example, the Law of Moses forbids *incest* (Lv 18:17; 20:14, 17, 19-21; Dt 27:20, 22-23).
- *Incest* involves sexual intimacy between individuals who are closely related by birth or by marriage, such as a parent and a child or step-child, or a brother and a sister.
- You might wonder why *incest* is not specifically mentioned in Paul's list of sexual offences in 1 Cor 6:9.
- I believe that the answer is that incest is so obviously wrong and wicked that its wickedness went without saying.
- But when a specific example of *incest* came to light in the Corinthian church, it was dealt with by Paul in no uncertain terms in **1 Cor 5:1-5 [READ]**.
- This passage leaves no doubt about the wickedness of incestuous relationships from God's perspective.
- Genetically, incestuous relationships face a greatly increased risk of producing genetically damaged or deformed children, because the same genetic defect may be transmitted to the child by both parents.
- I am not aware that the *sexual abuse of children* is specifically referred to anywhere in the Scriptures, but because their abusers are most often close relatives, such abuses would generally be included in the teaching against incest.
- The sexual abuse of children is so obviously contrary to the pattern established by God in the creation account that there was no need for scripture to even mention it.
  
- *Forced sexual intimacy* with an unmarried woman (*rape or sexual assault*) is also condemned in the Law (Dt 22:25-29).
- If the woman raped was engaged to be married, the man responsible would be put to death.
- If she was unmarried and not yet engaged, the man who forced her was compelled by the Law to marry her and forbidden ever to divorce her.
- I am unaware of any place where rape is specifically named in the New Testament,

but it is one of the offences included in the general Greek word for sexual immorality (<*porneia*>).

- Another form of sexual sin that is clearly forbidden in the Law of Moses is *bestiality* or having sexual intercourse with an animal.

- Both men and women involved in bestiality were to be put to death, along with the animal involved (Ly 18:23f; 20:15f; Ex 22:19; Dt 27:21).

- Offences that carried the death penalty under the Law reveal God's attitude toward the offence in question.

- *Bestiality* was considered especially repugnant because it was a part of pagan rites and mythology.

- As far as I know, *bestiality* is not specifically mentioned in the New Testament, but there is no doubt that it is wrong in God's sight, because it is a clear deviation from God's plan for sexual intimacy, and dishonours the divine image that God has placed in us.

- *Bestiality* is also included in the meaning of the New Testament Greek word for sexual immorality (<*porneia*>).

- *Polygamy* involves having one man simultaneously married to or living with more than one woman.

- It can also involve having one or more legal wives and one or more concubines.

- A concubine had less status and prestige than a wife, but nevertheless was recognized as being in an honourable relationship with their husband.

- Polygamy was practiced among the Jews in Old Testament times and it was still practiced in the first Christian century.

- Of course, it is still practiced by Muslims today.

- Polygamy is never explicitly forbidden in so many words anywhere in the Scriptures.

- Among the Jews it was not viewed as constituting adultery or sexual sin of any sort, and God never says in the Law of Moses that it should be.

- I think the Christian take on polygamy is that God permitted it because of the hardness of human hearts among the Jews as well as among other nations.

- We tend to see polygamy in an entirely negative light, regarding it as bad through and through and a testimony to the sexual greed of men.

- No doubt male sexual greed was and continues to be a factor in polygamy.

- My wife once asked a Muslim medical doctor how Muslim women feel about polygamy, and he said that they hate it.

- No doubt most women would prefer to have a man of their own, although some are just as inclined to wander sexually as are many men.

- The thought of **Jeremiah 31:22 [READ]** seems to be that in the future a woman will act in a new and unusual way, wanting to keep have just one man and have him to

herself, sexually speaking.

- This passage is speaking metaphorically about the spiritual infidelity of Israel, but the figure probably made sense to its hearers precisely because they were well acquainted with the tendency of some women to wander sexually.

- Comments made in Isaiah suggest that in some situations there was a positive side to polygamy, even from a woman's perspective.

- **[READ Isa 3:16 – 4:1].**

- In spite of such exceptional circumstances, the Christian Church has rejected polygamy as wrong, because of Jesus' teaching that the sexual pattern established by God at the time of creation was our guide, and that pattern involved only one man and one woman.

- Because polygamy was practiced among the Jews in early Christian times, some of the Jewish families converted to faith in Jesus included one man and two or more women.

- It was not considered honourable for such situations to be terminated by divorce, but the men in such marriages were not allowed to hold church office as elders or deacons, because they were not *the husband of one wife* [1 Tim 3:2, 12].

- It was considered improper for polygamous men to be held up as role models in a local church, because their marital pattern was out of keeping with the pattern established by God.

- *Polyandry*, the permitted sexual sharing of one woman by several men, is never specifically mentioned in the Bible, but Jesus' words rule it out as unacceptable just as they rule out polygamy, because the pattern for marriage established by God is one man and one woman.

- I have read that *polyandry* is openly practiced in some parts of India.

- In polyandrous marriages a man willingly shares his wife with other men.

- Usually those men are his brothers, and he shares his wife with them until they get wives of their own.

- Among the Jews it was understood that a woman could only be married to one man, so for that man to share his wife with another man constituted adultery, even if her husband consented to it.

- It would have been viewed as contrary to God's will and intent in creation to do this, even if both husband and wife consented to it.

- The same applies today to married couples in so-called open marriages in which each partner agrees to and approves of sexual infidelity by the other one.

- In **1 Cor 6:12 to 17 [READ]**, Paul explains why sexual immorality of every sort is so unacceptable to God.

- Paul introduces his subject by mentioning two short sayings that were probably widely quoted by individuals wanting to indulge their flesh, to justify doing whatever

they wanted to do, sexually speaking.

- Paul disagrees with the use that was being made of these two quotations to justify sexual immorality.

- This passage goes on to say that our Lord cares about our bodies, and wants us to manage them in a way pleasing to Him (vs. 13c).

- The proof of His concern for our bodies is found in His intention to raise them from the dead (vs. 14).

- We should honour Him with our bodies because we are connected to Jesus (vs. 15 - 17).

- Paul encourages us to flee from sexual immorality, because our bodies are indwelled by God's Holy Spirit, and belong to God (vss. 18 – 20).

**Q: Before we end our examination of what Christian ethics forbids or permits, sexually speaking, have you any questions or comments about God's views on this subject?**