

A LOOK AT THE NEW TESTAMENT

// Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

In chapter 1, Paul praises the Thessalonian Christians for the way in which they follow Jesus (cf. 1 Thess 1:3, 6-10). However, it's clear that they also needed to change a few things, including in their sexual attitudes and behaviour. Why is the way that Paul acknowledges these two things both an encouragement and a challenge to us in our lives? How can we be honest about the struggles we have with following Jesus?

In verse 3, Paul outlines God's plan for your life – that you would be sanctified. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul acknowledges that it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us, but then urges us to work this out in our lives. So, we are made holy by the Holy Spirit, and also called to be holy. How do these two realities help us in the struggle with lust and sexual immorality?

Paul mentions several things to remember in order to avoid inappropriate relationships:

- Verse 4, in the original language, seems to imply that having an active and healthy sex life within marriage is key to avoiding immorality (the word translated 'body' in the NIV is probably not a good translation...a more appropriate translation is 'wife')
- Verse 5 implies that knowing God is the great antidote to immorality (unlike the 'heathens' who 'do not know God')
- Verse 6 notes that immorality is actually a sin against our brother & sister, and damages them, as well as a sin against God.

You may like to take time on reflecting how each of these things need careful time and attention. You may like to pause and think which needs most attention in your life at the moment. Are you able to think of some specific practical tips to adopt that would help others to avoid sexual immorality?

How can we best help single people in our church community, who would dearly love to be married – and therefore have active an sexual relationship – but at present aren't?

study notes
week eight

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

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WAY IN

Reflection: Take some time to reflect on the relationships in your life. This commandment has much to say about faithfulness, integrity and honesty in all of our relationships. Ask God to teach you through this study about any relationships and practices in your life that need his transforming touch. Then ask him to help you to change.

Your friend says to you: “The church seems obsessed with sex. Isn’t it time that you Christians got over your out-of-date thinking and moved with the times. After all, when it comes to sex, it’s not as if the church is whiter than white anyway.” What would you say?

If you had to define what marriage is, and why it is beneficial to society, what would you say?

A LOOK AT EXODUS

// Read Exodus 20:14

The Ten Commandments are set in the context of our relationship with God and our relationships with people. Take a few moments to list the people who are most important to you and the people that you spend time with. You might like to write them down. Are each of these relationships in a good state?

Our culture largely ignores or trivialises the 7th commandment. Can you list the benefits that this commandment brings to a society? How have you experienced these blessings? Are there ways that you or those who are close to you have suffered by this commandment being ignored?

The commandments reveal to us the character of God. What does this commandment teach us about God?

// Read Matthew 5:27-30

How would you answer someone who says: “it really doesn’t matter what I think about in private”?

How would you answer someone who asks: “if Jesus words are true, then there is no hope for me?”

Jesus advocates drastic action to avoid sin. What action can you take to avoid slipping into wrong patterns of thought and behaviour?

QUOTE TO REFLECT ON

‘Our youth are subject to an endless barrage of confusing messages concerning relationships and sexuality. Our culture idolizes the never-satiated lusts for sexual intimacy and the trappings of material comforts. To this end the Christian church needs to be intentional in teaching the biblical vision for both Christian singleness and Christian marriage. This entails not “Christianizing” the pervasive relationship and material lusts of our culture into a preoccupation with building perfect families and exquisite homes. What is needed is a vision for promoting lifestyles in accordance with the fundamental tenets of the gospel, that the kingdom of God is at hand and that consummate satisfaction is to be found ultimately only in being reconciled to our God in Jesus Christ.’ (Barry Danylak)

What are the ‘confusing messages’ that our culture bombards us with about sex and marriage?

How can we develop a better vision of what it means to have a right attitude about relationships and the kingdom of God?