

# VIII

## GOING BEYOND THE LAVER

### Life Guidelines 1

Beyond the laver is where we press deeper into some of the issues of sexuality, applying all the foundations spoken up until this point. Most importantly – that of Jesus sacrifice for us and the participation in His purification processes in our lives.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR SEXUAL PURITY 1-8**

By R. Alcorn

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God." (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

#### **Part One: What You Need to Know**

1. Sex is good. God created it, God called it "good," and it existed before there was any sin in the world.

Sex was not created by Satan, Playboy, Hollywood, HBO, rock musicians, the Internet, or some pervert lurking in the shadows of a porno shop. Sex was created by the holy God of heaven, where purity reigns.

God made sex physically desirable by creating us with sex drives, without which sex wouldn't exist and neither would people. God's Word speaks openly of the pleasure of sex within the marriage relationship (Proverbs 5:18,19; Song of Solomon 4:5; 7:1, 6-9).

We shouldn't be ashamed to talk about what God wasn't ashamed to create. However, God requires us to address the subject in keeping with his intentions and requirements, not the world's. He warns us not to talk about sex in any inappropriate context:

"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place." (Ephesians 5:3-4)

God designed sex for the sacred union of marriage, and reserves it for that union. It is both the means by which children are conceived (something very close to God's heart) and a means by which marital intimacy is expressed and cultivated. When it takes place in its proper context, God is definitely pro-sex.

2. Like all good gifts from God, sex can be misused and perverted.

Water is a gift of God, without which we couldn't survive. But floods and tidal waves are water out of control, and the effects are devastating. Fire is an energy-producing gift of God that gives warmth and allows us to cook. But a forest fire or a house burning to the ground or a person engulfed in flames is fire out of control—it is horrible and frightening. Water and fire are good things which, when they occur outside their God-intended boundaries, become bad.

Likewise, God designed sex to exist within certain boundaries. When exercised in line with God's intended purpose, it is beautiful and constructive. When out of control, violating God's intended purpose, it becomes ugly and destructive. Sex is a good thing which, when it occurs outside its God-designed boundaries, becomes bad.

The problem isn't sex—the problem is us. We're sinners who can pervert, abuse, and rip away from their proper place the good things God created. The greater the gift from God, the more

power it has both for good and bad. Inside marriage, sex has great power for good. Outside marriage it has equally great power for bad.

### 3. The boundaries of sex are the boundaries of marriage.

Sex and marriage go together. Sexual union is intended as an expression of a lifelong commitment, a symbol of the spiritual union that exists only within the unconditional commitment of marriage. Apart from marriage, the lasting commitment is absent and the sex act becomes a false expression, a lie.

Every act of sex outside of marriage cheapens both sex and marriage. Sex is a privilege inseparable from the responsibilities of the sacred marriage covenant. To exercise the privilege apart from the responsibility perverts God's intention for sex.

Sex is designed to be the joining of two persons, of two spirits, not just two bodies. Sex should be giving to someone to whom I'm 100% committed (as measured by the state of legal marriage), not taking from someone to whom I'm uncommitted or partially committed.

"But we really love each other" has no bearing on the ethics of sexual intimacy—sex does not become permissible through subjective feelings, but through the objective lifelong commitment of marriage.

### 4. Your sexual purity is essential to your walk with God.

Sexual purity is not an option for an obedient Christian, it's a requirement. God's will is centered on our character and moral purity much more than on our circumstances, such as job, housing and schooling. You want to know God's will? You don't have to wonder. Here it is: "It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). There is no sense seeking God's will in other areas when you are choosing to live in sexual impurity in your mind or body.

"Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart." (Psalm 24:3-4)

"If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." (Psalm 66:18)

"If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable." (Proverbs 28:9)

"When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen," says the LORD Almighty." (Zechariah 7:13)

Sexual purity is inseparable from a committed Christian life. If you are not living in sexual purity, God will not hear your other prayers until you offer the prayer of confession and repentance and commit yourself to a life of holiness (1 John 1:9).

### 5. You are vulnerable to sexual immorality.

Don't kid yourself that it can never happen to you—it can. And if you don't think it can, it almost certainly will.

"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)

"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" (1 Corinthians 10:12)

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin . . . watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)

If you think you'll never be burglarized, you'll fail to take precautions to keep it from happening. If you think you'll never fall sexually, you'll fail to take precautions to keep it from happening.

## 6. You are targeted for sexual immorality.

Years ago there was scuttlebutt about an international "hit list," a calculated plan for paid assassins to murder strategic world leaders. The Enemy, Satan, has maintained a moral "hit list" throughout the ages. Since God's children are close to God's heart, Christians are at the very top of that list.

The more involved you are in serving Christ, the greater vested interests Satan has in destroying you and God's work in and through you. The evil one wants to take you down and to use your life as a bad example to other Christians, who will imitate your moral compromise. God requires that we be holy and pure instruments to be used by him (2 Timothy 2:20-21). More Christians—including Christian leaders—become useless and are lost to serving Christ due to sexual immorality than anything else. (See my booklet *Sexual Temptation: How Christian Workers can Win the Battle.*)

Here's the reality—the forces of evil have taken out a contract on you. There's a price on your head. Satan has declared war on you: "Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers of darkness, against spiritual forces of evil in the invisible realm" (Ephesians 6:12). These evil beings have vested interests in your moral collapse. They will do everything in their power to strike out at Christ and his church through enticing you into immorality.

Satan is neither omnipresent nor omnipotent—there are only so many demons and none of them can be two places at once. Therefore, fallen angels attack and tempt not indiscriminately but with strategic purpose. Satan does not have to waste his time on those who have already made the biggest messes of their lives. Rather, he specially targets those whose fall would have the greatest negative effect on the kingdom of God. That's why God's Word warns Christians:

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

The devil wants to derail you from serving God. He wants you imprisoned to sin. God wants you free. Only by exercising self-control and being on alert can we expect to resist the enemy's plan to lead us into sin. Satan "scouts us out" and knows only too well the chinks in the armor of every Christian. His aim is deadly, he excels at tailor-made temptations, and it is at our points of greatest vulnerability that he will attack.

Don't forget that "the one [Christ] who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). As powerful as the evil one is to tempt us, God is infinitely more powerful to deliver us and has given us in Christ all the resources we need to live godly lives:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

## 7. Your body belongs to God, not you.

"You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

If it's my house, I have the right to do what I want with it. If it's someone else's, I don't.

Sometimes when I'm speaking I ask to borrow a pencil from someone in the audience. Then I break it in half, throw it to the floor and stomp on it. There's always a wide-eyed silence and expressions of shock and discomfort in the audience. I ask them why they're bothered by what I've done, why they think I did something wrong. Someone always says "because it wasn't your pencil." Then I explain that it really was my pencil, that I gave it to the person ahead of time and asked her to hand it to me when I called on her. Suddenly it changes everything, because if it belongs to me, then (and only then) do I have the right to do with it as I please. If it belongs to someone else, I have no such right.

When you came to Christ, when you affirmed him as Lord of your life, you surrendered your entire self, including your body, to God. The title to your life was transferred from you to God. Christ owns you and your body. You are bought and paid for. "Your body" is really his body. He paid the ultimate price for it. What price? The shed blood of God Almighty! We are his both by virtue of his creation and his redemption. God has every right to tell me what to do with my mind and body. I have no right to do whatever I want with what belongs to God.

#### 8. Sexual purity begins in the mind, not the body.

"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality . . ." (Matthew 15:19-20).

"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

You will inevitably adopt the morality of the programs, movies, books, magazines, music, Internet sites and conversations you participate in. GIGO—Garbage in, garbage out; Godliness in, godliness out. The cognitive is basic to the behavioural—you become what you choose to feed your mind on.

Sow a thought, reap an action;  
Sow an action, reap a habit.  
Sow a habit, reap a character.  
Sow a character, reap a destiny.

Your future can be accurately predicted by what you allow your mind to dwell on. Sinful actions don't come out of nowhere—they are the cumulative product of little moral compromises made over time, which ultimately culminate in ungodly behavior.

There's nothing new about sexual temptation—what's new is how it has invaded our homes. In first century Corinth there were prostitutes all over the streets, but when you entered your home you had a sanctuary from the temptation. We live in a technological Corinth, where immorality can come into the privacy of our home through airwaves (television) and modems (the Internet). Most of us are only a few pushbuttons away from sexual immorality of the mind. Every choice we make to view and contemplate immorality desensitizes us to its evil.

Actions, habits, character and destiny all start with a thought, and thoughts are fostered by what we choose to take into our minds. Therefore we should take extreme care about what we feed our minds on.

"Above all else, guard your heart [mind, inner being], for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

