

A Study Of



ISSUES
OF
MORALITY

By David Phillips

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Issues of Morality

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Issues of Morality

Introduction

In a world where right and wrong are determined by each individual's selfish desires, the importance of being morally pure is diminishing. The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled today which says, "*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*" (Isaiah 5:20).

Sadly, this influence of mixed standards is seeping into the church. New Christians are not learning what it means to "*put off the old man*" (Colossians 3:9). Many older Christians are compromising God's righteousness because "times have changed." And those who do uphold God's righteous standard are scorned and called "old fashioned" and "legalistic."

Nevertheless, God's people are commanded to "*Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord.*" Therefore, in light of the digression that can be seen in the world, those who would serve God must be ever on their guard. Those who put their faith in the salvation of Jesus Christ must "*buy the truth*" and not sell it (Proverbs 23:23). They must hold fast to God's righteous standard, proclaim His truth, and stand fast in their faith lest they be carried away by the vain and foolish devices of men. They must look to the encouragement given by Jesus who said, "*He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels*" (Revelation 3:5). God expects His people to be victors, not compromisers! "*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*" (1 Corinthians 15:57-58).

This is why a study of current moral issues is so necessary. Satan is waging his warfare and those who are not armed and prepared will fall. But by studying God's word, striving for His righteousness and sharpening their senses to discern good and evil Christians can be victorious in Christ! This is the promise of God, as it is written, "*But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ... Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Peter 5-11).

The purpose of this study is to expose the error that exists in a few of the more prevalent moral issues that Christians face today. It will show the evils that are committed through such immoral practices and will help to direct the mind of each student to an understanding of what God's word says on these matters.

David Phillips

Bible Authority and Morality

Issues of Morality: Lesson One

Introduction

1. In today's world a person is hard-pressed to find a sure standard of right and wrong amidst the mire of human philosophy.
2. For the majority, moral and ethical issues are determined by an individual's preference rather than a divine standard.
3. Many have come to view the Bible as "out of date," or "old fashioned."
4. However, God gives us a standard of right and wrong that is both sure and constant.
5. He also shows us that if we want to have salvation in His Son, we must learn to respect His authority and the authority of His word in every aspect of our lives.
6. For this reason, this lesson is devoted to...
 - a. Understanding the relationship between the authority of God's word and the issues of morality that we face every day.
 - b. Helping us make our way through the mire of human philosophy.
 - c. And helping us establish the righteousness of God in every aspect of our lives.

Discussion

- I. **The Authority of God's Word in the Lives of His People**
 - A. Authority refers to "the power or right to act or command."^a
 - B. God is our Creator.
 1. As such, He has the right to act and to command His creation in any way that seems fit.
 2. From the evidence found in nature and in God's word, we can know assuredly that God only uses His divine authority in a way that is right, just, and loving (Psalm 145:17-21).
 3. These truths place great responsibility on our shoulders, for as the creation it is our whole duty to obey the commands given to us by our Creator.
 4. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.*"
 - C. According to the New Testament, this divine authority also belongs to Christ.
 1. "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth*" (Matthew 28:18).
 2. "*For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth...All things were created through Him and for Him...And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence*" (Colossians 1:16-18).

^a Guthrie D. Dean, *The Authority of the Bible in Ethics*. Orig. in *Abstain From Every Form of Evil*, pg. 1 edited by Mike Willis.

- D. This divine authority is expressed to man through the scriptures, which are inspired of God.
 - 1. Hebrews 1:1-2: “*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world*” (NAS).
 - 2. 2 Peter 1:20-21: “*Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*”
- E. For this reason, every aspect of our lives (i.e. our worship, our speech, the way we conduct and present our bodies, etc.) must be in complete agreement with the words found in the Bible if we are to be pleasing to God.
 - 1. **Matthew 7:21:** “*Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.*”
 - 2. **Colossians 3:17:** “*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*”

II. The Way of the World

- A. **God’s righteousness is everlasting (Psalm 119:142), but the ways of the world are constantly changing.**
 - 1. God created man in righteousness, but we sinned by disobeying Him. Therefore we entered into condemnation (Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4).
 - 2. Since the beginning men have continually grown more and more wicked.
 - 3. God destroyed the world with a flood in the days of Noah because of the wickedness of men (Genesis 6-9).
 - 4. Though Noah and his family were righteous, their descendents followed this same path of unrighteousness, separating themselves from God by their sins.
 - 5. Read Romans 1:18-32.
 - 6. Those who live according to the way of the world can be described by this statement, “*everyone did what was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6).
- B. **The way of the world is a continual digression away from God’s righteous standard.**
 - 1. For this reason, as time goes by, men no longer see a need to listen to God (2 Timothy 4:3-4).
 - 2. In their eyes, the farther away from God they fall the less they need His word.
 - a. “*Once a South Sea Islander proudly displayed his Bible to an American soldier during World War II. The soldier said, ‘We’ve outgrown that sort of thing’*” (Guy Roberson, *Introduction to the Bible*, pg. 12).
 - b. Many have said, “*The Bible is so old fashioned.*”
 - 3. As we will find throughout this study, men also apply these statements to the issues we will be covering (i.e. modesty, sexual immorality, etc.).
 - 4. What can we do?

III. A Call to the Old Paths

- A. **According to the world, God’s righteousness is old fashioned.**

1. This is the world's view today, but it also applied to the Jews in the days of Jeremiah.
 2. For this reason, Jeremiah is able to show us how we can overcome the world and restore our relationship to God.
 3. Jeremiah 6:16: "*Thus says the LORD: 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.'*"
- B. Jeremiah 6:16 summarizes perfectly the purpose of this series of lessons, for many of the conclusions we are going to come to will be viewed by some as old fashioned: i.e.
1. Dancing is sinful: Many see this view as "prehistoric." But the *Old Paths* of God's word teach us that dancing is lasciviousness.
 2. Sexual immorality: Many see the idea of keeping one's self pure before marriage is something for their grandparents and that today it is important to "see how it fits before buying it." But the *Old Paths* teach us that any sexual relationship outside of marriage is immoral.
 3. Modesty: Many believe that clothing that covers belongs in the eighteen hundreds. But the *Old Paths* teach us that clothing that does not cover can be considered the attire of a harlot.
- C. Because of this, we are commanded, "*be on your guard*" (2 Peter 3:17).
1. We must be on our guard lest we be led astray by the philosophies of men (i.e. seeking the wrong standards to justify our actions).
 2. We must be on our guard lest we allow our own desires to draw us away from God's standard (i.e. I don't want to give up dancing, smoking, scant clothing, etc.).

Conclusion

1. This study will challenge us. It will make us feel bad about things we have done and are doing. But if our heart is right, we will choose the *Old Paths* of God's word over the way of the world in the end.
2. 2 Corinthians 7:10: "*For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation*"
3. James 1:21: "*Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.*"
4. Matthew 7:13-14: "*Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.*"

Questions

For Lesson One

1. What makes issues of morality hard subjects to deal with?
2. What is authority?
3. Why does God have authority to command and to judge mankind?
4. What is man's purpose on this earth? Use scripture to support your answer.
5. Does Jesus Christ have any divine authority? Use scripture to suppose your answer.
If yes, how much?
If no, explain.
6. Where can we go to find out what God does and does not authorize?
7. What aspects of our lives should we conform to that standard? Use scripture to support your answer.
8. Does God's righteous standard ever change?
9. What is sin? Use scripture.
10. Does the world's standard for right and wrong ever change?
11. As the world digresses farther and farther from God's standard, how do they begin to view the scriptures?
12. God's word was written between 2,000 and 3,400 years ago. Does that make it old fashioned? Explain.
13. What passage exhorts us to seek the "Old Paths?"
14. When it comes to searching the truth on issues of morality, for what must we be in our guard?

Dancing

Issues of Morality: Lesson Two

Introduction

1. On the surface, dancing may not seem like that important of a subject.
 - a. Many people might even say dancing is quite innocent.
 - b. Then again, to a toddler a colorful medicinal capsule that resembles a piece of candy might seem innocent as well.
 - c. But every parent is keenly aware of the danger of allowing their little child to swallow an “innocent looking pill.”
2. The truth is there are a great many things in this world that are far more dangerous than they appear on the surface. Sin is the worst of all.
 - a. “*And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light*” (2 Corinthians 11:14).
 - b. It is for this reason that we are expected to exercise our senses do discern good and evil, according to Heb. 5:14.
3. The purpose of this lesson is to help the student exercise his/her senses to discern the evils that lie in the seemingly innocent activity known as dancing.

Discussion

- I. Test All Things
 - A. Because sin is lurking at every corner, Christians must be watchful.
 1. Paul commands us to *test all things* in 1 Thess. 5:21.
 - a. *All things* means that we cannot leave anything untested, even those things that seem innocent.
 - b. In Joshua chapter nine Israel made a covenant of peace with Gibeon without inquiring of the Lord because Gibeon seemed to be poor and wretched. In truth, the leaders of Gibeon had disguised themselves and deceived Israel.
 - c. Israel failed to *test all things* and disobeyed God as a result (Josh. 9:24-25).
 2. After we *test all things*, we are commanded to *hold fast what is good*.
 - a. This means that only after a thing is proven to be good in the sight of God are we to hold fast.
 - b. If we must hold fast to only what is good, then we must get rid of anything that does not pass the test.
 - c. “*Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light*” (Rom. 13:12b).
 - B. Every test has a key or standard.
 1. In the case of Christian works, God’s word is our standard (1 Tim. 6:3-5).
 2. As such, God’s word does not list every single sin that the imaginations of men could possibly invent. The world could not contain the volumes of books it would take to hold such a list.
 3. Rather, God teaches us principles.
 - a. He shows us the nature, the attitudes and the characteristics of sin.
 - b. He then tells us to avoid anything that includes those characteristics.

- c. Notice: “*Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry...and things like these*” (Gal. 5:19-21).
- 4. Dancing is not specifically condemned in the Bible. However, when we test it as we ought to, we will find that it does fit into the category of “*things like these,*” as stated in Gal. 5:21!

II. Understanding the Principles

- A. Written in Galatians 5:19-21 is a list of *works of the flesh* that we must avoid.
 - 1. In that list there are two fleshly works which tie directly to the subject of dancing: *impurity* and *sensuality* (or uncleanness and lasciviousness, KJV).
 - 2. We must understand the definition of these words in order to apply them.
 - a. **Uncleanness:** “In a moral sense, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligated living” (Thayer); “suggestive of the fact that sensuality and evil doctrine are frequently associated” (Vine).
 - b. **Lasciviousness:** “Unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence” (Thayer). “Excess, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness” (Vine’s).
 - c. Webster’s defines lasciviousness as “inclined to lustfulness; wanton; lewd...arousing sexual desire...indicating sexual interest or expressive of lust or lewdness...playfulness, wantonness.”
- B. These terms can be applied to a great many things that exist in the world.
 - 1. 1 Peter 4:3-4: “*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. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you.*”
 - 2. Notice that these practices are so common in the world that it thinks Christians strange who do not participate in them.
 - 3. This is also true of dancing. Sadly, there are even some Christians to think it strange that others do not go do dances—but that does not make it right.
 - 4. Let us learn from the example of Israel in Exodus 32 (see vs. 6, 19, 25).
 - a. The people thought they were just having fun.
 - b. They thought that what they were doing was OK.
 - c. They were just *playing*.
 - d. ***BUT THEY WERE WRONG!*** (VS. 19-21, 25-28).

III. Dancing in the Bible

- A. Dancing of which we read in the Bible may be divided into two categories:
 - 1. That which expressed great joy and gratitude in light of victory or blessings.
 - a. 2 Sam. 6:14: “*And David was dancing before the LORD with all his might, and David was wearing a linen ephod.*” Consider also Ex. 15:20-21; Judge. 11:14; 1 Sam. 18:61; Psalm 30:11
 - b. In each of these instances, men and woman danced separately, there was no mixed dancing and it was an expression of rejoicing, not entertainment.
 - 2. Dances for amusement, pleasure, entertainment.
 - a. Ex. 32:19-28: “*So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses’ anger became hot, and he cast the tablets*

out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.” Consider also 1 Sam. 30:16; Mark 6:21-28.

- b. These kinds of dances often involved merriment, reveling and mixed dancing. They were often the result of sinful desires or motives, and they included the characteristics discussed in the works of the flesh. They are the closest representation in the Bible to the dancing that commonly takes place today!

- B. The dancing which is popular today fits into the second of these two categories.
 1. It certainly involves indecent bodily movements and/or unchaste handling of males and females! This is the definition of *lasciviousness*.
 2. What is worse, these indecent bodily movements are done while male and females (our children) are holding their bodies close to one another.
 3. The pleasure derived from it is neither wholesome nor godly by any means.
 4. As much as the world would like to deny it, modern dancing causes people to be aroused! If there is any doubt, just ask the fourteen year old boy what he was thinking while holding the beautiful girl close to him!
 5. The very fact that the boys want to dance with the girls and vice versa, no matter how innocent this may seem, is evidence of the sexual nature of dancing.
 6. This behavior was punished in the Old Testament, condemned in the New Testament, and must be condemned today.

IV. Arguments In Favor of Dancing.

- A. “Dances are chaperoned”: If it is as “wholesome” as people make it out to be, there would be no need for chaperones! Supervision does not make evil good.
- B. “Good exercise”: Exercise does not make a thing right. There are thousands of other ways to exercise that do not involve lasciviousness.
- C. “I control myself and have no lustful thoughts”: What about the other person? Whether or not a sinful practice is tempting to us it is still sinful. In the scriptures, self-control is not the ability to avoid being affected by temptation, but it includes the ability to control ourselves so as to avoid situations where we will be tempted or where we may tempt others.

Conclusion

1. As we contemplate the sinful practice of dancing, as well as the rest of the issues of morality that will be discussed in this series, let us keep in mind the instruction of God found in Rom. 13:14, “*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.*”
2. Many teenagers and parents today do not view dancing as sinful. But when we break it down and compare it to the works of the flesh we should realize that there is more to this “innocent act” than most people want to admit.
3. If we are going to hold fast what is good we must cast off everything that does not please God.
4. For this reason, let us instill in our minds as well as the minds of our young people the sinful nature of dancing, understanding that the world will view this as strange (1 Pet. 4:3-5), but that God will be please!

Questions

For Lesson Two

True/False

- ____1. Dancing is just a recent problem.
- ____2. The Bible approves of some types of dancing.
- ____3. Webster defines lasciviousness as “indecent bodily movement.”
- ____4. Dancing causes some to be aroused sexually.
- ____5. Dancing will not harm one’s influence.
- ____6. The world views Christians who are apposed to dancing as strange.
- ____7. One who has engaged in mixed dancing should repent.

What Is Wrong With These Excuses?

- 1. “Dancing is just a form of exercise.”
- 2. “I can dance and control my thoughts.”
- 3. “I just go to chaperoned dances.”
- 4. “The Bible commends dancing.”
- 5. “Anyone who thinks dancing is wrong is just old-fashioned.”

Short Answer

- 1. Just because something appears to be innocent on the surface, does that automatically make it right? Explain.
- 2. According to Heb. 5:14, what must mature Christians do with their senses? What does this mean?
- 3. Is dancing easily recognized as a bad thing by those who are babes in Christ? Explain.

Modesty

Issues of Morality: Lesson Three

Introduction

1. A Christian is a person who shows reverence for God in all things.
2. Like everything else, the clothing that Christians choose to wear must also show reverence for God and His righteous standard.
3. **The world does not concern itself with God's values concerning clothing.**
4. But if Christians are to be faithful to their God in all things they must consider what God says concerning the subject of modesty.

Discussion

I. **The Character of God's People**

- A. Our behavior manifests the condition of our heart (Prov. 4:23).
 1. Some have erroneously said, "Since God looks at the heart He does not care how we dress" (see 1 Sam. 16:7).
 2. On the contrary, God teaches us that how we dress directly reflects what is in our hearts (Prov. 4:23).
 - a. Clothing can reveal sorrow (2 Sam. 3:31)
 - b. Clothing can identify a person with a specific group, such as a gang or culture (Zeph. 1:8).
 - c. Men and women have their own distinctive apparel (Deut. 22:5).
 - d. Clothing can also cause one to appear as a widow or even a harlot (Gen. 38:14-15).
 - e. Indeed, God has said much about clothing.
 3. He also shows us that He cares very much about what we wear : "...*women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation*" (1 Tim. 2:9).
- B. God looks at our hearts, but He expects us to behave in such a way that is worthy of a godly heart.
 1. 1 Timothy 2:9-10: "...*in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works*" (emph. mine DP).
 - a. "*In like manner*" is in connection to the "holy" conduct of men mentioned in 1 Tim. 2:8. Women are to adorn themselves in a holy manner.
 - b. "*Modest apparel*" means orderly, well arranged, and decent. It can be applied to not wearing too much as well as not wearing too little.
 - c. "*Propriety*" means proper or shamefacedness. There is such a thing as clothing which is not appropriate for a person professing godliness. This also means to have a sense of shame. A person who is improperly exposed on account of their clothing (or lack thereof) should be ashamed.
 - d. "*Moderation*" is to be sober, moderate, or self-controlled. It causes a person to hold their passions in check. It also means to be of sound judgment. Our

- clothing requires judgment that is controlled and conforms to the righteousness of God rather than our own selfish ambitions.
- e. *“Professing godliness”* suggests that clothing is a matter of godliness just as much as what we say and how we act. If we do not have a godly heart then we will reject God’s instruction on this matter.
2. Titus 2:1, 4-5: As a matter of sound doctrine, younger women are commanded to learn how to be...
 - a. *“Discrete”*: This means to be safe, of sound mind, self-controlled, moderate. This describes a person who does not desire to draw attention to herself with her clothing or otherwise.
 - b. *“Chaste”*: This means to be clean or pure. How we dress can prove us to be unclean. If we have a pure heart then we will have pure motives in choosing our clothing and we will change if our standard does not meet up with God’s.
 - c. *“That the word of God may not be blasphemed”*: Our dress, among other things, can cause the word of God to be blasphemed if it does not conform to God’s righteous standard. What does your clothing say?
 3. 1 Peter 3:1-4: Addressing wives, Peter commands that they...
 - a. Not let their adornment be merely outward: The world desires to be seen by their outward beauty. But in the kingdom of God outward beauty is worthless if the heart is not right. Notice:
 - b. *“...let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God”* (vs. 4).
 - c. What does your clothing say about your spirit? It is a gentle spirit, or a haughty spirit that seeks the attentions of the people around you?

II. Modesty is a Subject that is Sorely Needed Today!

- A. Throughout the Bible God stresses the importance of being properly clothed.
 1. In Genesis 3:7-11 Adam and Eve saw that they were naked after they had sinned and they were ashamed, so they sewed fig leaves into aprons to cover themselves.
 - a. It was shameful for their nakedness to be seen.
 - b. In spite of their attempt to cover themselves, God still saw the need to make them garments out of animal skin to cover them (Gen. 3:21).
 2. Approximately two-thousand years later, God’s standard had not changed as we see from His description of the priestly garments (Ex. 20:26; 28:42-43).
 - a. Though we cannot use these passages as authority for a specific doctrine, we can learn from it that even after several generations God still wanted His people to be properly clothed.
 - b. *“Nakedness”* is defined in Ex. 28:42: *“...cover their nakedness; they shall reach from their waist to their thighs.”*
 3. Centuries after Moses gave the law, God showed that it was still shameful for one’s nakedness to be exposed in Isa. 47:3. Note: the only way to avoid such shame was to be properly clothed.
 4. Even in the New Testament God’s standard had not changed, though it had been nearly four-thousand years after He had made clothes for Adam and Eve: *“...that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed”* (Rev. 3:18).

5. Be impressed that no matter how much man's ideas of proper clothing change, God's standard has not changed in the least from the beginning until now! "*Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth*" (Psalm 119:142).
- B. Nakedness is not a matter of culture or custom, it is a matter of principle which God has established since the beginning.
 1. It is true that as cultures change so do clothing styles and fashions.
 2. Certainly, Christians should take this into consideration. God does not expect us to wear robes as they did in biblical times.
 3. However, style does not affect God's standard. People may wear different styles of clothing while continuing to cover their nakedness.
 4. God expects His people to live in such a way that exemplifies His righteousness in all that they do, including the way they dress.
 5. If we fail in this then it is just as bad as using profane language, spreading error, or committing sexual immorality.
 - C. It is clear that the world's idea of proper clothing nowhere approaches God's.
 1. Men, even some who are in the church, have forsaken God's righteous standard for modest apparel.
 2. God required that the thigh be covered so that nakedness was not seen.
 3. In the world today, clothing is considered modest even when the upper thigh can be seen!
 4. Tight clothing has become popular so that, no matter the length, every feature of the body can be clearly seen. Modesty applies to more than just the skin!
 5. Women wear low cut shirts, revealing a part of the body that God says should be reserved for husbands only.
 6. See-through clothing has also become popular. There may be fabric over the body, but what use is that when one can see everything through the fabric?
 - D. For this reason, Christians have a great need to examine their consciences, to step back from the world and to turn their eyes to God's word.
 1. There are some Christians who condemn the world for its immodesty, but they themselves wear clothing that would be condemned in the Bible.
 2. One preacher rightly noted, "Then, there are those who attend [church services] with dresses too short on both ends" (Connie Adams).
 3. We may think that we are being modest, but we must take care! For there are some whose consciences have been "*seared with a hot iron*" (1 Tim. 4:2).
 - a. That is to say, they have become blind to their own sins.
 - b. They no longer have the shamefacedness that God expects of His people (1 Tim. 2:9). If we are not careful, we may fall into this same trap.
- III. Establishing some Guidelines:
- A. How short is too short?
 1. Understand that to ask the question, "How short can I go?" is a dangerous game.
 2. It is like saying, "How much can I drink before I get drunk?"
 3. God teaches us to *flee* from sexual immorality, not to nudge up as close as we can before crossing the line (1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22).

4. If one has to worry about others being able to see too much, whether standing, sitting or otherwise, chances are it is not as modest as it should be.
 5. When something is of a godly character the Christian should not have to worry about it or be ashamed of it (1 Pet. 3:16; Rom. 6:21-22).
 6. A helpful practice that is used in many Christian households is that the women ask the men in the house (or another Christian whom they can trust) if what they are wearing is too revealing, and vice versa.
- B. Not confused by “false gods.”
1. Popularity: just because clothing is popular it does not make it acceptable. There are cultures in Africa and South America where it is popular to where **nothing but body ornaments**. Christians must seek God’s approval, not man’s!
 2. Comfort or convenience.
 - a. Jesus tells us that we must deny ourselves (be willing to be inconvenience ourselves) if we are going to be His disciples (Luke 9:23).
 - b. The Christian must seek God’s righteousness above all else, even above his/her own comfort (Matt. 5:6; 6:33). Jesus did this for us!
 - c. Be aware that our comforts might cause others to stumble (sin). Concerning this, Paul wrote, “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Cor. 6:12). “*Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble*” (1 Cor. 8:13).
 - d. Let us apply this principle to our clothing as well.
 3. “I don’t care what other’s think. I’ll where short shorts and tight clothes if I want”:
 - a. Jesus warns that if we do not listen to Him we will be judged (John 12:48).
 - b. We must uphold God’s righteousness regardless of our own fleshly desires (Phil. 2:3).
 - c. Even if we do not want to conform to God’s righteous standard for our own sakes, then let us consider the souls of those around us (1 Cor. 8:13).
 4. “It is too hot, God understands if I want to be cool”—but there is decent clothing that is still cool.
 5. “But it’s so cute”—if we are godly at heart then righteousness will take preeminence over cuteness. Remember, women should adorn themselves, but in a way that is proper for one professing godliness (1 Tim. 2:10).
 6. “But the activity calls for it”—one would not wear their under garments in public, so why wear the equivalent when everyone is watching? The Bible shows that some activities do call for less clothing, but in each case, when a person was in mixed company or in public, they clothed themselves proper (John 21:7).
 7. It is shameful for our nakedness to be seen, no matter what the purpose. If we have the shamefacedness God expects then we will acknowledge this! Let us put God’s standard first in our lives so that we may continue to be as shining lights in a world that is sinking further and further into darkness.

Conclusion

1. Our clothing is a serious matter.
2. Let us strive to overcome the world and to uphold God’s righteous standard with our clothing.

Questions

For Lesson Three

1. What does it mean to show reverence toward God?
2. How does our clothing show reverence toward God?
3. Using a dictionary, define “modest” and “modesty”.
4. How does the condition of our heart affect the way we dress? Explain.
5. Does God care how we dress even though He “looks at the heart of a man?” Explain.
6. According to 1 Tim. 2:9-10, what three characteristics must be applied to our clothing? Briefly describe each.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
7. According to Titus 2:4-5, what characteristics are older women expected to teach younger women? Briefly describe each.
 - a.
 - b.
8. According to 1 Pet. 3:1-4, where does true beauty come from? How should this affect the way we dress?
9. What areas of the body are considered “nakedness?”
10. Is it possible to be clothed and still have our nakedness exposed? How?
11. Has God’s definition of nakedness changed since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden?
12. Briefly list a few ways that a person can tell whether or not their clothes are too short, tight, or see-through:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
13. Is it possible for a person to think their clothing is modest when in fact it is not? Explain.
14. When we are in public, do things like the activity we are participating in, our comfort, our own desires, etc. change God’s standard for modesty in any way? Explain.

Situation Ethics

Issues of Morality: Lesson Four

Introduction

1. Men will go to any length to justify their own sins.
2. **Some who profess godliness will actually cast out God's law in order to keep from feeling as if they are in the wrong.**
3. This is the case with the doctrine known as situation ethics.
4. This doctrine is wreaking havoc on the souls of men; it is leading a great many people away from the truth and into a life of sin and error.
5. **It is, in part, the fulfillment of Paul's warning to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, "*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*"**
6. In light of our study on morality, we must make ourselves aware of this error and seek to overcome it.

Discussion

I. What Is Situation Ethics?

A. Defined:

1. **"Ethics means 'a series of rules and laws and principles by which we act and which tell us what to do.' But 'situation ethics' is not geared to rules and regulations. This system of ethics refuses to be circumscribed by rules or laws. It says there is nothing right or wrong. Moral behavior is relative, not absolute. Decisions depend on the situation at hand, rather than law" (Weldon E. Warnock, Situation Ethics. Orig. in *Abstain from Every Form of Evil*, edited by Mike Willis, pg. 13).**
2. **It is an "approach to morality that is frankly nonbiblical." "The decision as to what is right or wrong, good or bad, is relative to the situation at hand" The criteria of right and wrong is "self-love" (Robertson McQuilkin, *Biblical ethics* pp. 145, 146).**

B. In practice:

1. **The claim of those who advocate situation ethics is this, "Situation ethics has only one norm or principle or law (call it what you will) that is binding and unexceptionable, always good and right regardless of the circumstances. That is 'love'" (Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, pg. 30).**
2. **Yet they also claim, "For the situationist there are no rules—none at all" (ibid. pg. 55).**
 - a. In other words, situationists claim that whatever is loving in any given situation is what we must do, even if we are in direct violation of the commands of God.
 - b. For this reason it should be understood that their definition of love is far different than that found in the Bible. "Circumstances alter rules and

principles” (ibid. pg. 29); “all laws and rules and principles and ideals and norms, are only contingent, only valid if they happen to serve love in any situation...the Christian chooses what he believes to be the demands of love in the present situation” (pp. 30, 55).

- c. They say love is not bound by rules, but God says, “*love is the fulfillment of the law*” (Rom. 13:10).
- C. In short, situation ethics is a means for men to justify themselves, claiming that their sins are done out of love, while leaving God utterly and complete out of the equation.
1. If a man thinks it would be good to lie in a given situation, then that is what he should do, even though God condemns lying (Rev. 21:8).
 2. If a woman thinks it is good to commit adultery in a given situation then that is what she should do, even though God condemns adultery (1 Cor. 6:9).
 3. If two people of the same gender love each other (romantically) then they should be allowed to marry, even though God condemns homosexuality (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
- II. The Effects of Situation Ethics.
- A. Situation ethics removes God’s standard while leaving it up to man to decide what is right or wrong.
1. “The situationist wages war against the law, aggressively denouncing the law of God as a standard of life” (McQuilkin, pg. 153).
 2. They claim that men have evolved, become enlightened to the point that the laws in the Bible are of no use to us any more. That only the individual has the ability to choose what is right or wrong in his present situation.
- B. Even though God is love, situation ethics removes every thought of God in connection with love.
1. Joseph Fletcher, a leading proponent of situation ethics, stated, “Situation ethics has only one norm or principle or law (call it what you will) that is binding and unexceptionable, always good and right regardless of the circumstances. That is ‘love’” (pg. 30).
 2. Yet he defines this love as this, “For the situationist there are no rules—none at all” (pg. 55).
 3. Therefore, they say they strive to fulfill the law of love, but in fulfilling their law of love they forsake the very person who showed us the true meaning of love—God (1 John 4:16).
 - a. Situationists say that love is not defined by law, but God says “*love is the fulfillment of the law*” (Rom. 13:10).
 - b. And again, “*If you love Me, keep My commandments*” (John 14:15).
 - c. Finally, “*If you keep My commandments, you abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love*” (John 15:10).
- C. Situation ethics exalts human nature above the realm in which God created it.
1. God created man dependent upon Him for their life. “*LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps*” (Jer. 10:23).

2. Yet, situation ethics assumes that men have the complete knowledge and wisdom needed to determine what is right and wrong without the aid of God's divine revelation. "You must decide for yourself as you face each decision: what would love do" (McQuilkin, pg. 149).
3. Interestingly, situationists claim that men have outgrown God. Yet of God it is written, "*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*" (Eph. 3:20).
4. Who would you rather trust with your soul, men who have sinned from the beginning, or God who created the universe and sent His son to die for our sins?

III. Situation Ethics and the Bible

A. Matt. 12:1-8: Jesus and situation ethics.

1. Situationists say that in this passage Jesus used situation ethics to justify the sins of His disciples by justifying the sin of David.
 - a. "David was allowed to eat the forbidden bread because he was hungry."
 - b. "Therefore, God allows us to sin if it is loving in our situation."
2. However, a closer examination of this passage will show that Jesus approved of no such thing.
 - a. The Pharisees approved of David even though he committed this sin.
 - b. But Jesus said His disciples were "guiltless" (vs. 5).
 - c. Jesus showed that the Pharisees were guilty of partiality by approving of David's sin while condemning His disciples even though they were innocent.
3. Jesus then shows that at times mercy is necessary. But there is a difference between mercy and the doctrine of situation ethics.
 - a. He shows that there are some specific commands of God that *appear* to defile the law, but do not because they are righteous in themselves (i.e. removing a donkey from a ditch, performing the service of the priests).
 - b. It is not a sin to pull a donkey out of a ditch. Therefore, to show mercy to the donkey on the Sabbath was acceptable.
 - c. However, it is sinful to commit adultery. Therefore, no matter what situation one is placed in, to commit adultery is still sinful.
 - d. Notice the difference: Jesus said it was acceptable to show mercy by doing righteousness, but the situationist seeks to show mercy by doing a sinful thing (i.e. committing adultery, stealing, etc.).

B. God's warning against this kind of doctrine.

1. Proponents of situation ethics are guilty of the sins which Paul exposed in Romans 1:18-32.
 - a. Situationists claim that they have outgrown then need for God's word. Of these men Paul wrote, "*Professing to be wise, they became fools*" (vs. 22).
 - b. They say that we must decide for ourselves what is right and wrong without the law. Of these men, Paul said they "*became futile in their thoughts and their foolish hearts were darkened*" (vs. 21).
 - c. They say that nothing is truly wrong in and of itself, but all things are right depending on the situation. Of these men Paul wrote, "*who exchanged the truth of God for a lie*" (vs. 25). "*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things*

which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness” (vs. 28-29).

2. In the days of Isaiah the prophet, Israel fell into this same way of thinking.
 - a. The situationist says that even the vilest of sins is good if the situation calls for it. Of these men Isaiah wrote, “*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*” (Isa. 5:20).
 - b. They say that they have outgrown God’s word; they are wise enough to choose for themselves. Of these men Isaiah wrote, “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight” (Isa. 5:21).
3. Love Is Obedient to the Law.
 - a. The situationist says that we must forsake the law in order to fulfill love.
 - b. However, God says that the very purpose of the law is to teach us how to show love. “*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. ’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ’You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets*” (Matt. 22:37-40).
 - c. And again, “*Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm*” (1 Tim. 1:5-7).

Conclusion

1. The truth is, when we obey God’s law toward one another we are showing the greatest form of love that exists.
2. Love and the law of God are inseparable. The moment we say that we no longer need God’s word is the moment we stop loving our neighbors.
3. We must see, therefore, that the purpose of situation ethics is not to show love toward one another, but to destroy God’s righteous standard and to make men feel like they are doing right when in fact they are neck deep in sin.
4. When dealing with *issues of morality* or any other Bible subject we must avoid the line of reasoning known as situation ethics at all costs.

Questions

For Lesson Four

1. What is situation ethics?
2. In what passage does Paul prophecy of this form of doctrine? Explain why this doctrine fits his description.
3. What does situation ethics seek to do with God's law.
4. What is the supposed motivation behind situation ethics; what does it seek to accomplish according to its proponents?
5. Did Jesus support situation ethics in Matt. 12:1-8? Explain.
6. Is the love supposedly sought after by situationists the same as the love of God? Explain.
7. What are some of the effects of situation ethics?
8. List several things that Paul says concerning those who live their lives according to doctrines such as situation ethics:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
9. List two things Isaiah says about these people:
 - a.
 - b.
10. If we truly have love for our neighbors, how will we view God's law? Why?

Drugs and Alcohol

Issues of Morality: Lesson five

Introduction

1. Drug abuse has become a plague in our society; it is an evil that Christians must diligently expose and overcome.
2. In this lesson we will deal with alcohol separately, for the world tends to view it in a different light than other drugs.
 - a. But its effects, and the evil that men do with it are identical to that of illicit drugs.
 - b. Therefore, it should be understood that alcohol is a drug

Discussion

- I. Drugs—The Corruption of Every Good Thing.
 - A. *“Let them have dominion over...all the earth...”* (Gen. 1:26).
 1. All things in God’s creation are good: *“And God saw it and it was good”* (Gen. 1:25).
 2. Everything in creation was given a purpose and man was given the authority to take dominion over it and to use it according to its purpose.
 3. When we carry out this charge according to God’s will we fulfill the passage which says, *“It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage”* (Eccl. 5:18).
 - B. In his sinful scheming man has taken God’s creation and used it for evil.
 1. God gave us the plants and animals for food and livelihood (Gen. 1:29-30), but men have turned these things into the object of their worship (Rom. 1:23).
 2. God determined that food may be enjoyed by men, but they have used it for gluttony (Prov. 28:7; Tit. 1:12).
 3. In this same manner, God has created things such as alcohol, but man in his corruption and lack of self-control has turned it into something evil (compare. 1 Tim. 5:23 with Prov. 23:29-32).
 - C. It is this extreme misuse and corruption of God’s creation that we seek to refute in this lesson.
 1. In our day and age men have forsaken God entirely and have come to rely heavily on chemicals such as alcohol and narcotics to give them comfort and pleasure.

2. This is a sin that is rampant. It seduces our leaders, reaches out to our younger generations, tempts our children and seeks to destroy society as a whole.
3. On top of all these things, it is in every way contrary to the righteousness of God. For these reason its evil must be exposed and we, as Christians, **must flee its wicked influence: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph. 5:11).**

II. Alcohol

A. Alcohol in the Bible vs. alcohol today.

1. The wines sold in the markets today generally contain 8%-15% alcohol.
2. The wines in biblical times, on the other hand, contained a maximum of 9% alcohol because this is the natural maximum in wine.
3. The reason for this difference is that in the making of wine today men fortify the juice (add alcohol to it to make it more potent).
4. **Therefore, we should understand that even the “strong drink” mentioned in the Bible was not as strong as most alcoholic beverages of today.**

B. “Wine” in the Bible vs. the wine of today.

1. **The term “wine” as used in the Bible referred to every product derived from grapes or from their juices; from the grapes themselves (Isa. 65:8), to juice, to strong drink. A child drinking a bottle of Welch’s grape juice would be drinking wine according to the Bible’s use of the word.**
2. This must be understood, for there are many passages in the Bible that **talk about wine. When you read “wine” in the Bible, do not automatically assume that it is alcohol!**
3. Often, the only way we can tell which kind of wine is being referred to is by considering the context.

C. In the Bible, almost every reference to alcoholic wine, or “strong drink”, is placed in a negative light.

1. More often than not, alcoholic consumption is condemned. Read these passages: Prov. 20:1; Isa.5:11; 28:7-8; Gal. 5:21; 1 Pet. 4:3.
2. Consider Noah (Gen. 9:20-21), Lot (Gen. 19:32ff), Elah (1 Kings 16:8-10).
3. The alcoholic in Prov. 23:29-35.
4. Drunkards will not enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
5. Civil leaders are commanded to abstain from it (Prov. 31:4-5).
6. Priests were forbidden to drink it when serving the Lord (Lev. 10:9-10). **It should be observed that Christians are priests in God’s kingdom today (Rev. 5:10) and we serve Him constantly (Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15).**
7. It is a mocker, a brawler, and it leads men astray (Prov. 20:1).

D. The above passages should discourage every spiritually minded person from the practice of social drinking or drinking for pleasure.

1. Nevertheless, some try to justify the practice: “Jesus turned water into wine in John chapter two.” Considering the above passages, we may conclude that Jesus did not cause those people to get drunk, for that would have been a sin and we know Jesus committed no sin (1 Pet. 2:22).
2. The Bible condemns this form of drinking (it is referred to as carousing in Luke 21:34 and 2 Pet. 2:13), therefore even if it is pleasurable, it is still a work of the flesh.
3. “I drink, but I don’t get drunk.” Despite the government’s standard for being drunk (.08), drunkenness occurs whenever the mind and/or body is affected by the alcohol. Therefore, having a blood alcohol level of .08 is not the beginning of drunkenness, it is just a higher level of drunkenness.
4. Even when Paul told Timothy to take some wine for stomach’s sake (medicinal use—1 Tim. 5:23), he specified “a little wine.” This in no way constitutes social drinking, but shows one way to properly use alcohol.
5. God expects His people to have complete control (as much as depends on them) over their faculties. Social drinking is a voluntary surrender of our faculties. It shows a lack of desire to uphold God’s righteousness.
6. If a person will not listen to any of these points, then let him at least consider this.
 - a. We have a duty to let our lights shine in the world (Matt. 5:13-16).
 - b. The Bible describes the drinking of alcohol for pleasure as a work of darkness.
 - c. How can we expect our lights to shine brightly when we dim them by partaking in the works of darkness?
 - d. How can we expect to be good examples when we ourselves partake of that which is considered to be a brawler, a mocker, and is known to lead men astray (Prov. 20:1)? Are you prepared to answer this question on the judgment day?

III. Narcotics/Elicit Drugs

- A. The negative affects of alcohol are just as negative when brought on by other substances.
 1. Alcohol is a drug.
 2. Even though narcotics and other elicit (illegal) drugs are not mentioned in the Bible, they fit into the same category as alcohol.
 3. It is the wicked use and influence of these substances and the willingness to give ourselves up to them which is a sin.
 4. Remember, God created everything good. But we sin when we misuse His creation. The use of drugs for pleasure as practiced in the world today is a horrible misuse of God’s creation.
- B. Addiction is a sin.
 1. Jesus purchased us with His own blood so that we may serve Him.

2. Our bodies belong to Him (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20); we must rely completely upon Him for all things (Prov. 3:5; Eph. 6:10; 1 Tim. 6:17).
 3. But when we subject our selves to substances which cause us to rely on them for happiness or fulfillment, we tear ourselves out of Christ's hands and offer ourselves to those substances as to idols.
 4. For this reason, Paul said, "*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*" (1 Cor. 6:12).
 5. If we allow ourselves to be brought under bondage by any substance we sever ourselves from Christ.
- C. Even without addictions, the use of drugs is a sin.
1. As noted before, when we willingly give up control of our minds and bodies we forsake the commands of God.
 2. Our influence in the world is destroyed and we lead men astray.
 3. In short, the use of drugs and alcohol is a deadly sin!
- IV. Smoking
- A. Some seek to separate smoking from the above category of drug use because it is legal and it does not affect a person's mental faculties.
1. However, it is addictive. As we have noted, addiction itself is a sin.
 2. Some have said, "I'm not addicted, I just like it." If this is true, then the Christian who is truly seeking first the kingdom of God will gladly give up smoking for the sake of being a good influence in the world (1 Cor. 8:13).
 3. If a person is not willing to give it up because "I don't want to," then that in itself is a sign of addiction.
- B. As noted in 1 Cor. 3:16-17 and 6:19-20, our bodies belong to God.
1. Can you honestly say when you "light up" that Christ is living in you (Gal. 2:20)? Not to mention the horrible affects it has on the body.
 2. Some ask, "What is wrong with it?" Let us ask, "What is right with it?"
 3. Are you upholding God's righteous standard by smoking?
 4. Are you being a good example by smoking around children?
 5. Are you being considerate of others who are allergic, who care about their lungs, or children whose developing lungs can be permanently damaged by the smoke?

Conclusion

1. Prov. 22:3: The prudent man foresees evil and hides from it. It is clearly evident that drugs result in great evil. Let us be prudent and flee such things.
2. Let us strive to follow the example of Daniel of whom it is said, "*But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank*" (Dan. 1:8, *emph. mine, DP*).

Questions

For Lesson Five

1. Why would a person view alcohol in a different category than drugs?
2. What observations suggest that alcohol is actually a drug?
3. In the beginning, did God create anything that was not good?
4. Does man have God's permission to use all of creation?
5. How has sin affected man's use of God's creation?
6. Would you say that this principle applies to the use of drugs? Explain.
7. How was the wine of biblical times different than the wines commonly sold today?
 - a.
 - b.
8. In many of the passages where the use of alcoholic beverages is mentioned, is it described as a good thing or a bad thing? Give three passages as examples:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
9. Is there a proper way to use alcohol? Give a passage to support your answer.
10. In light of all that the Bible says concerning the use of alcoholic beverages, how would the prudent person respond when faced with the decision to drink or not to drink? Explain.
11. How are illicit drugs similar to alcohol?
12. How does God view addiction? Explain.
13. Is addiction the only thing that makes drugs bad? Explain.
14. What good can come from smoking?
15. Even though smoking is legal in our society, what does the Bible teach that shows that it is in fact an "unfruitful work of darkness?"

Astrology

Issues of Morality: Lesson Six

Introduction

1. Why would astrology be included in a study on issues of morality?
 - a. It is one sin in a category of sins which God deals with in a very severe manner throughout the scriptures.
 - b. God describes those who practice or believe in astrology as being in the same class as witches, sorcerers, demon worshipers, and medians—the occult.
2. In spite of this, astrology has become one of the most popular activities in our culture today.
 - a. A few years ago it was discovered that over 2000 newspapers in the U.S. carried astrological columns.
 - b. There were in employment 10,000 full-time and 175,000 part-time astrologers.
 - c. And that 33,000,000 Americans seriously believed in astrology.
 - d. These figures were taken several years ago and its popularity has only increased.
3. One of the most saddening developments is that there are some Christians who have been lured away from the truth by this doctrine.
4. For these reasons, astrology is an immoral sin that must be dealt with just as severely as the sexual sins and drug abuse that plague our nation.

Discussion

- I. Astrology Defined
 - A. In principle:
 1. It is a “type of divination that consists in forecasting earthly and human events by means of observing and interpreting the fixed stars, sun, the moon and the planets...” (Encyclopedia Britannica).
 2. Astrology is the belief that the sun, planets, and stars have an influence upon individuals and the course of human events. Astrology attempts to predict the future by analyzing the movements of these heavenly bodies. It also contends that the position of the sun, moon, planets and stars at the moment of a child’s birth have a direct impact on his or her character and that charting their positions (finding their “sign”) will reveal an individual’s destiny” (Dunagan, *Astrology*, pp. 1, 2).
 - B. In practice:
 1. The belief that the stars contain the key to the future has been around for thousands of years. Since the days of Genesis men have looked to the stars in an attempt to tell the future, while holding the stars up as objects of their worship (Deut. 4:19).
 2. Many rulers of old relied on sorcerers and astrologers for counsel (Isa. 47:13; Dan. 2:27-28, read vs. 1-26 for the context).

3. Many used the position of the stars to make decisions in government, concerning battles, to interpret dreams, and even to make mundane decisions such as whether or not to go outside on a particular day.
4. Today, astrology has become less of an official source of counsel and more of a mystical tool for the average person seeking a shortcut to wealth, success and relationships.
5. "It appeals of human selfishness, claiming to have the inside track to fame, fortune and love" (Dunagan, *Astrology*, pg. 2).
6. Astrology is a means for men to feel like they have a sure guide to happiness **without having to be "limited" by God's word.**
 - a. If a person has character flaws, it is because of their fate according to the stars. Therefore, there is no need for them to change their life.
 - b. If a person has a bad day it is because it is "written in the stars" and is therefore not their fault.
 - c. If a person has a good day it is because that is their fate and has nothing to do with God.
 - d. Rather than studying the scriptures to learn what is right or wrong and feeling any sense of shame for being wrong, people look to the newspapers to see what the stars say about the kind of day they are going to have and then make their decisions based upon that. If they make bad decisions they are not in sin, they just read the stars wrong.
7. In this manner millions of people are duped into thinking that they have the key to a successful life when in reality, "*Professing to be wise, they became fools*" (Rom. 1:22).

II. Why Does God Condemn It?

A. For many, astrology seems innocent enough; "It's just a gimmick."

B. But God has a much different opinion of it.

1. Throughout the scriptures God has placed astrology with all of its variations (from seeking one's fortune to actually worshiping the stars) in the same category as idolatry and sorcery.
 - a. Deut. 4:19-20: "*And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.*"
 - b. 2 Kings 17:16: "*So they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.*"
2. The reason for this is that it draws men's hearts away from trusting in God and leads them to trust in the stars for their "fortune." Anything that leads men's hearts away from God is an idol!
3. God expects men to live upon every word that proceeds from His mouth, but those who believe in and practice astrology look to the stars (the creation) rather than God the Creator for their guidance.
4. "Like all other forms of divination, astrology is not content with what God has revealed. It is man's attempt to circumvent God's revelation. Man's attempt to

find the answers to life and the future, without needing to be dependent upon God (Hebrews 11:6)” (Dunagan, pg. 3).

5. Astrology seeks to remove the power to create and to control from God and place in the heavenly bodies instead: “The true astrologer believes that the sun is the body of the logos (*logos* is Greek for “word”, see John 1:1-3, DP) of this solar system, ‘in Him we live and move and have our being.’ The planets are the angels, being modifications in the consciousness of the logos” (ISBE p. 300).

III. Is There Any Mystical Power In It?

A. Some astrologers claim that there is power in astrology and that is why God warns us about it.

B. On the contrary, God’s warnings are not due to its supposed power, but its obvious vanity and worthlessness.

1. Isa. 47:13-15: “*You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; let now the astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from what shall come upon you. Behold, they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; it shall not be a coal to be warmed by, nor a fire to sit before! Thus shall they be to you with whom you have labored, your merchants from your youth; they shall wander each one to his quarter. No one shall save you.*”
2. Jer. 10:2-3: “*Thus says the LORD: ‘Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile.’*”
3. Dan. 2:10, 19: “*The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, ‘There is not a man on earth who can tell the king’s matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean... Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.’*” – Notice, even when faced with death these astrologers could not interpret the king’s dream. Only God has the power to reveal such things.
4. “Right here we find God’s inspired commentary on everything ranging from astrology, palm-reading, tarot cards, mediums, spiritualists, witch-doctors and so on. All of these occult practices are completely devoid of power. If they can’t reveal a simple dream, then obviously we shouldn’t be intimidated or fearful of the claims which people ascribe to such practices in our own time” (Dunagan, pg. 4).

IV. Scientific Problems

A. Astrology is based upon an earth-centered universe.

1. Until the 17th century it was commonly thought that the earth was the center of the universe.
2. Therefore, until that time astrology was viewed with some respect among worldly scholars.
3. But with the dawning of science and the awareness that the earth traveled around the sun and not the opposite, astrology quickly lost any sort of intellectual credibility.

4. From that point it was left to the extremely gullible and those not wishing to face the reality of God in their lives.
- B. Astrology is based upon only five planets and not nine.
 - C. The zodiac, which is the imaginary belt of heavenly bodies used to determine a person's "sign."
 1. There has been more than one construction of the position of the planets in the zodiac.
 2. There is no agreement as to what the true position of the zodiac is.
 3. **Could this be due to the fact that there isn't one?**
 - D. The zodiac is based on a uniform rotation of the planets (the thought that they rotate in the same spot over and over again).
 1. However, it has been seen that the planets are slowly moving apart and therefore moving out of position as seen in the zodiac.
 2. **As a consequence, a person's sign according to the zodiac is not really their sign, because the heavenly bodies are in a different position now.**
 - E. **It ought to be enough that God's word condemns the idea of astrology. This information simply confirms its ridiculous nature and is meant to draw a person's attention away from this foolishness and direct it back to the sure and unchangeable truth of God's word.**
- V. Why Flee Such Vanity?
- A. First and foremost, because God commands it (Eph. 5:11).
 1. His word is truth.
 2. We must obey His command for the sake of obedience.
 3. But we can be sure that every one of His commands is filled with wisdom.
 - B. Like all error, astrology has a way of leading man further and further away from God.
 1. There are some astrologers who believe that astrology is from God and that it is encouraged in the Bible.
 2. We have seen that such a belief is not true.
 3. But those who seek to justify their fascination with this error persist. Their **supposed interest in God's word fades as they rely more and more on astrology.**
 4. Once a person has made himself comfortable with the idea of seeking his **fortune in the stars he begins to feel less of a need to heed God's council.**
 5. His heart is drawn away from truth and becomes indulged in vain and worthless wisdom of men (read Rom. 1:18-32).

Conclusion

1. Let us not be fooled into thinking that astrology is an innocent past time. Nations have been led astray by its evil.
2. This is the sort of vain thing that we must flee as Christians. Let us not wait until the danger is near. Let us be prudent and flee such things now (Prov. 14:15; 22:3).

Questions

For Lesson Six

1. Why would astrology be included in a study on issues of morality?
2. Briefly described the basic philosophy of astrology.
3. How was astrology used in biblical times? Provide a scriptural reference.
4. How is astrology used today?
5. What evil attitudes are generally seen in those who try to use astrology to improve their lives?
6. Is astrology simply an innocent “gimmick?” Explain.
7. In what category of sin does God place astrology?
8. What is it about astrology that would place it in this category?
9. Is there any truth or power in astrology? Provide a scriptural reference.
10. Every fact about nature that is found in the Bible is in complete agreement with the facts and principles of science. Can this be said of astrology? Explain.
11. If astrology is powerless and worthless, why is it so important that we flee from it?

Sexual Immorality

Issues of Morality: Lesson Seven

Introduction

1. Sexual immorality is rampant in our society.
2. One needs merely to turn on the television in order to witness the extent to which our nation has given itself over to such immorality.
3. As God's people we must strive to overcome this influence.
4. For this reason, let us strive to understand God's standard for sexual morality and to flee the corruption that is in the world.

Discussion

I. **God's Standard for Sexual Morality**

- A. Proper interaction between men and women (decent, respectable).
 1. There is a proper way in which men and women who are not married should interact with one another.
 2. God even says that there is a proper way they should think about one another (Matt. 5:27-28).
 3. Lasciviousness occurs when we do not interact with each other in this manner.
 - a. It is the "unchaste handling of males or females."
 - b. Young people should understand that romantic/affectionate handling of men and women is designated by God for the marriage relationship only! Outside of the marriage it is unchaste, it is lasciviousness.
 4. Those who choose not to conduct themselves in a way that is appropriate according to God's standard are described in Gal. 5:19-21; 2 Pet. 2:9-10.
 5. "*For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness*" (1 Thess. 4:7).
 6. If this is God's will concerning the social interaction between men and women who are not married, consider what He says about things such as premarital sex (fornication), adultery, homosexuality and so forth.
- B. Uncleanness: "Impurity," "in a moral sense: the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living."
 1. Uncleanness can occur in our deeds (Eph. 4:19). When we practice immoral things.
 - a. When we use our bodies in ways that God condemns. When we act inappropriately toward other people.

- b. This is important for teenagers (and even adults), for what is affectionately referred to as “making out” is uncleanness; in appropriate interaction between two people who are not married.
 - 2. Uncleanness can occur in our words (Eph. 5:3-4).
 - a. It is impure speech (vulgarity, profanity, “dirty” jokes, etc.).
 - b. When we speak of the immoral practices in the world with pleasure or with inappropriate humor we are being unclean.
 - 3. Uncleanness can even occur in our thoughts (Gen. 6:5; Prov. 23:7).
 - a. For this reason we must seek to control our thoughts, thinking on godly things rather than fleshly things (Phil. 4:8).
 - b. This is especially important for young men and women in light of the immodest attire that is so common today.
- C. Lewdness: “Lasciviousness, licentiousness.” “Unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness...shamelessness, insolence, filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males or females.”
- D. Premarital sex or fornication: “illicit sexual intercourse in general,” all sexual immorality.
 - 1. Though commonly practiced today, it is exposed by God as blatant immorality.
 - 2. People who practice fornication will not enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
 - 3. It is contrary to sound doctrine, those who practice it are under the condemnation of the law of God (1 Tim. 1:9-11).
 - 4. They will be judged by God (Heb. 13:4). “*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:31).
- E. Adultery: “to have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife” or husband. Dishonor of the marriage bed (Heb. 13:4).
 - 1. These people will be judged by God (Heb. 13:4) and will not enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
 - 2. It is a work of the flesh and will receive condemnation (Gal. 5:19-21).

II. **Men’s Abandonment of God’s Standard**—New Age Philosophy

- A. There was a time when society in general respected God’s principles for sexual morality.
 - 1. Television had a more respectable standard for modest dress. For example, women could not even show their belly buttons on TV.
 - 2. Schools also stressed the importance of proper clothing.
 - 3. Premarital sex was a thing to be shunned (though many people still did it).
 - 4. Adultery was abhorred.

- B. However, those times are long gone.
1. Jude 7 describes perfectly the path that the world has taken.
 2. **Just as with Sodom and Gomorrah, men in the world have “*given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh.*”**
 3. The new-age philosophies of “Free Love” and “sexual expressionism” have taken over.
- C. This reckless abandonment of God’s moral standard has not been limited to the philosophers, but has permeated our society in every fashion.
1. In the media, women are flaunted as sexual lures to entice consumers.
 2. In our schools, young women want to look like the women in the media so they dress in such a way that lures young men, but they cannot understand when they become the victims of rape.
 3. Beginning in the teens, young men and women use dating as a sexual game rather than a means to find the person they will marry.
 - a. Young ladies giggle with one another as they discuss how one of them “hooked up” with one of the boys at school.
 - b. Young men hoot and holler as they brag about their sexual victories and which “base” they were able to reach in their most recent venture.
 4. This attitude only increases as they go from their teens to their twenties.
 - a. The college experience is often filled with fornication and all manner of immoral “experimentation.”
 - b. Even in our society’s opinion of marriage, abandonment of God’s moral standard can be seen in the fact that the “next step” after dating is no longer an engagement, but having one of the individuals “move in” with the other.
 - c. For many this makes sense “Because,” as they say, “it’s better to try it on for size before making the big commitment,” as if marriage were a shoe or an article of clothing.
 - d. But God shows us that any sexual activity before marriage is condemned and those who continue to practice it will be condemned (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Heb. 13:4).
 - e. Marriage is not something that men can try on for size, it is a commitment between two people who love each other to work with one another no matter how easy or how hard life gets. It is a commitment to God and is not to be treated like a piece of plastic that can be thrown away at will!
- D. On top of all these things is the problem of pornography
1. It is becoming more and more accepted.
 2. Pornography is not art, it is uncleanness.
 3. It is not beauty, it is lewdness.

4. It transgresses Jesus' words in Matt. 5:28, "*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*"
5. No man or woman, whether married or single, whether young or old has the right to fulfill the lusts of their flesh and their eyes with the filthiness that is pornography.
6. The eye is the lamp of the body (Luke 11:34). If we want to keep our bodies pure, if we want to be holy and righteous before our God then we will not only abstain from practicing sexual immorality with our bodies, we will also protect our eyes from the filth of pornography.
7. "*Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness*" (Luke 11:34).

Conclusion

1. What may be the hardest thing for Christians to deal with is the ridicule they receive from the world when they choose not to participate with them in sexual immorality: "*In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you*" (1 Pet. 4:4).
2. But we must not give in.
3. We must open our eyes to the evils that are around us, understanding that the things which the world views as common place are often severely condemned by God.
4. We must flee the sexual immorality that is in the world, teaching our young people about the dangers of playing the sexual games often perused at school, cautioning them, showing them that purity in the sight of God is better than the greatest treasure on earth.

Questions

For Lesson Seven

1. Is sexual immorality limited as to the way in which it can influence God's people? Explain.
2. Is there a proper way that God expects men and women to interact with one another?
3. List some activities other than fornication which are commonly practiced among unmarried couples today which would be seen as inappropriate by God.
4. In Gal. 5:19, what kind of works are these things described as?
5. Read Gal. 5:22-23. What is the difference between the fruit of the spirit and the works mentioned in question 4?
6. How does God view premarital sex? How does this compare with the world's view?
7. How has the sexual immorality of the world affected the way teenagers conduct themselves today?
8. What usually happens when teenagers who practice such things graduate and move on in life? Do they eventually grow out of it, or does it just become worse? Explain.
9. Is God pleased when men and women "try one another on for size" before getting married? Explain.
10. Is pornography an innocent past-time?
11. How does God view this sort of thing?

Abortion

Issues of Morality: Lesson Eight

Introduction

1. In the beginning, when God created man and woman, He determined that they would marry and produce children.
2. But men have defiled the sexual relationship by committing all manner of fornication.
3. As a consequence, STD's have spread throughout the world like a plague.
4. But there is another consequence that has caused much debate in recent years—women who commit fornication become pregnant.
5. Rather than discouraging men and women from committing the sins which incur these consequences, men have instead sought ways to remove the consequences.
6. What is their solution to unwanted pregnancies? Abortion.

Discussion

- I. What Is The Issue?
 - A. The definition of abortion.
 1. To abort something means “to cause to cease or end at an early or premature stage...to terminate before completion” (Webster’s).
 2. Abortion, therefore, is “the arrested development of an embryo or an organ at a more or less early stage” (Webster’s).
 - a. It is the *ending or termination* of a child’s life at a *premature* stage.
 - b. Rather than allowing a child to be born naturally, it is the removing of an unborn child from the mother’s womb before the child is able to sustain itself.
 3. The vast majority of abortions take place because an expecting mother does not want to have the responsibility of caring for a child; therefore she aborts it and literally throws it away.
 - B. The whole issue comes down to one question: “When does life of a separate human being begin?”^b
 1. Some may ask, “How can any person just throw away a baby before it is born?”
 2. The reason many will give is that “Since the baby was not yet born it was never alive; therefore they are not destroying life, just removing cells and flesh from a woman’s womb.”
 3. “The abortionist may refer to abortion as simply a process of limiting fertility. He may refer to it as killing the cells and tissues of conception. He may even refer to the early stages of development as ‘potential life’” (Buchanan, pg. 64).
 4. This is the major argument used by proponents of abortion to overcome any objections to this procedure.
 5. Other arguments have also been derived from the above argument.
 6. “Pro Choice”

^b Bob Buchanan, *The Abortion Issue*. From Abstain from Every Form of Evil, pg. 63.

- a. “The mother should have the right to choose.” Here again, the only way a mother has the right to choose whether or not to abort the child is if that child is not really alive.
 - b. Abortionists try to sugarcoat this issue by calling it “Pro Choice,” saying, “After all, who shouldn’t have the right to choose?”
 - c. But if the child is more than cells and flesh inside of the woman, if it is alive, then the destruction of life takes preeminence over a woman’s right to choose. She does not have the right to decide whether or not that child’s life may be taken from him/her.
7. “The Woman has the right to control her body.”
- a. Along the same lines as Pro Choice, many have argued that a woman should have the right to control what she does with her body.
 - b. “If she wants to have a baby, fine. If not, she should be able to control it.”
 - c. Though the conclusion derived from this argument is way off the mark, the premise is actually quite accurate.
 - d. A woman should be able to control her body. The problem is that women are not controlling their bodies and, in most cases, that is why they become pregnant in the first place.
 - e. In the vast majority of cases, women were able to control whether or not to have sex, therefore they were able to control whether or not they became pregnant.
 - f. If a woman does not want a baby then she should control her body by not committing fornication.
 - g. If a woman does become pregnant, she should acknowledge that even though she has the right to control her own body, the baby inside of her is another body and not her own.
- C. So then, one of the questions we must answer is when does a child become alive? Before or after birth?
- II. When Does Life Begin? Conception or Birth?
- A. Through science, doctors have been able to prove that there is life in the womb at the point of conception.
1. They have been able to prove that at the point of conception the child is a “complex, dynamic, rapidly growing organism” (Buchanan, pg. 64).
 2. By the eighth week of development the child develops every part of his/her body so that he/she is a complete human being.
 3. “After the eighth week, no further original organs will form—everything that is already present will be found in the full-term baby. From this point until adulthood, when full growth is achieved somewhere between 25 and 27 years, the changes in the body will be mainly in dimension.”
 4. The vast majority of abortions take place after this eight week period.
 5. Within the third month the child becomes active and begins to move and kick, bend his wrists, turn his head, frown, squint, and open his mouth.^c
 6. All of this information is important and, for many, is the very crux of the issue.

^c “Abortion, The Medical Evidence Against,” as quoted by Clifford Bajema, *Abortion And The Meaning of Personhood* (Baker, Grand Rapids), pp. 25-27.

7. However, for the Christian there is another aspect that must be considered and is the ultimate determination as to whether abortion is immoral or not. That is...
- B. What does the Bible teach concerning life before birth?
1. The Bible speaks of a child in the same manner both before and after birth. The word used to describe John the Baptist while he was still in his mother's womb, which is translated "babe" in Luke 1:41, is also used of infants and young children in Luke 2:12, 16; 18:15; 2 Tim. 3:16.
 2. Before John the Baptist was born he showed signs of life while in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41).
 3. The Psalmist was formed by God in his mother's womb in Ps. 139:13-15.
 4. In Job 3:11 Job said, "*Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not perish when I came from the womb?*"
 - a. In order for Job to have died at birth he must have been alive before birth.
 - b. In verses 13-14 Job said that had he died at birth he would have been at rest with kings and counselors.
 - c. If he was not alive before he was born, then how could he have been at rest? There would have been no soul to be at rest.
 5. Jacob and Esau were spoken of as living children within their mother's womb, for they "*struggled together within her*" (Gen. 25:22).
 6. God shows that He regards the life in the womb just as much as He regards the life outside of the womb. For while Jeremiah was still in his mother's womb God had a plan for him (Jer. 2:5).
 7. If God regards children in the womb, so must we. There is life. Those who advocate and practice abortion are advocates of murder.

III. Why Is Abortion So Bad?

- A. Abortion is murder. It takes the life of a child.
1. Murder is defined as "the unlawful and malicious or premeditated killing of one human being by another."
 2. The Lord who created man commanded, "*Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man*" (Gen. 9:6).
 3. "*But the cowardly...murderers...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" (Rev. 21:8).
- B. Abortion shows a disregard for human life and the value of a child.
1. The Bible describes man as created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27).
 2. For that reason it is a sin to hate our fellow man, let alone commit murder (1 John 4:20-21).
 3. "In the Bible, children are considered the heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3) and a 'blessing' (Ps. 128:3)" (Mike Willis, *Is Abortion Sinful?*, pg. 10).
 4. Men should have respect for human life and for the value God places upon children.
- C. "Without natural affection" is condemned in Romans 1:31.
1. Some other versions of the Bible may translate the term used here as "unloving" or "heartless."

2. It is translated “without natural affection” in the KJV and ASV because it means, “hard hearted toward kindred” (Thayer). “Especially of parents for children...” (Vine’s).
 3. “This expression denotes the want of affectionate regard towards their children. The attachment of parents to children is one of the strongest in nature...And yet the apostle charges on the heathen generally the want of this affection. He doubtless refers here to the practice so common among heathens of *exposing* their children, or putting them to death” (Barne’s Notes On The New Testament).
 4. Compare these comments with Ps. 106:37-38.
 5. Those who murder their own children today are guilty of this same crime; they are without natural affection.
 6. Of such God has said they are “worthy of death.” “*Those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them*” (Rom. 1:32).
- D. It promotes sexual immorality.
1. The vast majority of abortions occur with young women who have committed fornication or adultery and do not want their child.
 2. Along with sexual disease, pregnancy is one of the consequences of unbridled lust and sexual immorality.
 3. With abortion those consequences are taken away. Where there are no apparent consequences, men will practice evil all the more.
 4. With the popularization of abortion, fornication is increasing as is the rate of abortions. More people are committing fornication now that they have found an easy way around the consequences.

Conclusion

1. We need to be aware of evils such as abortion.
2. Many in the world are accepting of this evil, and its acceptance is only increasing.
 - a. “On 22 January 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled on the Roe vs. Wade case, striking down Texas law prohibiting abortion. Since 1973 abortion has been legal in the United States.
 - b. “In the years since 1973 ruling, 20 million unborn babies have been slaughtered in American abortuaries” (Willis, pg. 1).
3. Concerning such things, Christians need to take a stand.
4. We need to be aware of such evil, let others know about it, and make sure our children are aware of it.

Questions

For Lesson Eight

1. What are some of the physical consequences of committing fornication?
2. What is abortion?
3. What is the major issue in the debate over abortion? Explain why is this an important factor in the issue?
4. What Is Pro Choice? What is wrong with its argument?
5. Does a woman have the right to control her body?
6. How can a woman control her body so that she does not have to care for a child that she does not want?
7. **Once a child has been conceived, does a woman's right to control her body give her the right to destroy the life of the child within her? Why?**
8. What has science discovered concerning the growth of a child in the womb that proves that it is alive?
9. Does God teach that a child is alive while in the womb? Explain.
10. Give four reasons why abortion is a form of immorality that we must flee:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.

Homosexuality

Issues of Morality: Lesson Nine

Introduction

1. In the beginning God created a man and a woman and determined that they should have a **lifelong relationship called marriage**, in which they would **procreate** according to God's pattern. "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*" (Gen. 2:24).
2. In spite of the beauty of this relationship, mankind has "**cheapened the blessing of sex and turned it into something dirty and profane**" (Smith, *Homosexuality: Strange Flesh*).
3. One such perversion of God's pattern is known as **Homosexuality**: the sexual interaction between two people of the same gender.
 - a. Though there was a time in our culture when this practice was considered an abomination by the general public, things are exactly the opposite today.
 - b. Not only do the majority of people in our society approve of this immorality, but they are aggressively striving to squelch any and all opposition to it.
 - c. **Even this lesson outline would be considered "hate speech" by some.**
4. Both adults and teenagers alike are under pressure to accept the practice of homosexuality in our society.
5. Lest we collapse under the pressure that has been created by this movement, we must be **soberly reminded of God's word on this matter**. We must have the courage to acknowledge the truth and to spread the truth to all who are willing to listen.

Discussion

- I. Homosexuality Is Strictly Condemned By God
 - A. Some people claim that they can be faithful Christians while continuing to practice homosexuality.
 - B. **But God says...**
 1. "*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites... will inherit the kingdom of God*" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).
 - a. Notice again what it says, "*Do not be deceived*"
 - b. Many are trying to deceive us by saying that God approves of something which His word strictly forbids.
 - c. But we must not be deceived.
 2. People may call themselves Christians, but if they continue in their sins a mere title will not allow them to inherit the kingdom of heaven.
 3. Continuing on to the next verse (1 Cor. 6:11) we note that it says, "*And such were some of you*"
 - a. The people to whom Paul was writing were once sinners in the world.
 - b. "**But,**" as Paul went on to write, "*you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*" (vs. 12). That is to say, they obeyed the gospel wherein they became Christians.

- c. Some of these Christians were homosexuals, but seeing that they could not continue to practice such things and still inherit the kingdom of heaven they gave up their evil ways.
 - d. In order for one to have salvation in Christ he/she must follow the example of the Corinthian Christians and give up immorality, among which is homosexuality.
 - e. Those who do not cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven.
- C. In Acts 15 a letter was written by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem to the Christians who had been converted from the Gentile nations.
1. The apostles and elders observed that though the Jews new of God’s moral standard (Acts 15:21), the Gentile Christians may have been ignorant of such principles.
 2. Therefore, in order to instruct the churches not to bind the rituals of the Law of Moses (such as circumcision) but to uphold the moral standard taught therein, the letter was sent.
 3. This is a statement from that letter. *“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well”* (Acts 15:28-29).
 4. Concerning the *“sexual immorality”* from which they were to abstain, the law says this:
 - a. *“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination ”* (Lev. 18:22).
 - b. *“If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination ”* (Lev. 20:13).

II. **Homosexuality Is Not “Loving”**

- A. Those who support homosexuality claim that it is “loving,” and for that reason it should be accepted by God and Christians.
1. “It’s very difficult to use those...passages in the Bible to condemn same-gender loving people today...The primary values of relationships are love and justice” (Shueunemeyr, minister for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Ministries for the United Church of Christ, published in the Mill Creek Community News, July 20, 2005, pg. 2).
 2. When a vote was passed that supported “same-sex marriages” in the United Church of Christ, one woman responded, “Jesus’ ministry was all about love and acceptance...So, I don’t understand how you could not feel this way...This to me seems like the Christian point of view” (Keller, *ibid.*).
 3. This is the general attitude that is accepted by many in our nation.
 4. As a result, those who oppose homosexuality are accused of being hateful, dogmatic, legalistic, and prejudice.
 5. But is it really “loving” to support homosexuality? Does the fact that two people are emotionally attached to one another legalize sin?
- B. Love of a specific sin does not justify that sin!

1. If one is able to call a sexual relationship between two people of the same gender “loving” they must be understand that it is a perverted kind of love.
2. Just as these people pervert their natural functions (Rom. 1:26-27), so every thing connected with their sin is perverted.
3. Some say that since it is a matter of love, the “Christian” thing to do would be to allow Homosexuality to prosper.
4. However, God says that true love “*does not rejoice in iniquity*” (1 Cor. 13:6).
 - a. We have clearly established that homosexuality is iniquity.
 - b. If two people truly have the love of God then they will not rejoice in such iniquity, but flee it!
 - c. They will rejoice in truth. God’s word is truth (John 17:17), therefore they would rejoice in God’s word rather than trampling it under their feet as this person has done...
 - d. “We believe in God. We don’t believe in the Bible. To believe in the Bible is a form of idolatry” (Van Keuren, *ibid.*)
5. If homosexuals had true love then they would acknowledge the truth revealed in Rom. 13:10
 - a. “*Love is the fulfillment of the law.*”
 - b. If they had true love then they would fulfill God’s law, not spurn it.
6. Because love is the fulfillment of the law, love for our neighbor is defined by God’s law.
 - a. To fulfill every aspect of God’s law is to love one’s neighbor in the most “loving” way (Rom. 13:10).
 - b. This love includes not causing our neighbor to stumble (1 Cor. 8:13).
 - c. No matter how “loving” we think we are being toward someone, if the way in which we love them is condemned by God (homosexuality) then it will cause us and the other person to be condemned.
 - d. To pursue such a thing is not loving!

III. A Person Is Not Born With Homosexuality

- A. Those who practice homosexuality claim that they are born with it.
 1. They say it is natural for them to be that way,
 2. That even if they wanted to, they could not change.
- B. However, God shows us that homosexuality is not natural, but is a corruption of the natural function of men and women.
 1. Rom. 1:26-27: “*For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.*”
 2. Notice that this is not a “natural desire,” nor is one “born with it.”
 - a. Rather, it is a “*vile passion.*”
 - b. It is “*against nature.*”
 - c. Those who practice homosexuality forsake the “*natural use,*” and commit what is “*shameful.*”
- C. God created man and then woman.

1. God created Adam first then said, “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him*” (Gen. 2:18).
2. For a helper God did not create another man, but a woman—Eve (Gen. 2:21-23). Eve was the suitable helper.
3. Since this is how God created it, this is the natural pattern. Anything different is a perversion.

IV. **Times Have Changed, But God’s Word Has Not**

- A. Seeing that homosexuality is condemned in the Bible, some people have argued that since the times have changed, so has God’s acceptance of homosexuality.
- B. However, God shows us that His standard cannot be changed by men (Ps. 119:142, 144).
 1. At no point in time has God allowed a changing society to become the standard between right and wrong.
 - a. Throughout Jewish History Israel continually forsook God’s word in order to pursue the abominable ways of the gentile nations. But God did not change (Isa. 24:5-6).
 - b. When the gospel was being preached a host of different societies in the first century God’s standard for moral conduct stayed the same.
 - c. God’s word did not change as it was preached to various societies; rather all men from all nations were expected to change their ways to conform to God’s word. “...but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20).
 - d. In some of those societies homosexuality was even more common than in America, but men were still expected to repent of it (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
 2. Contrary to popular opinion, “Rampant homosexuality is an indication of serious degradation in a society,” not the progression of such (Don Martin, The Truth About Homosexuality).
 - a. The sin of homosexuality in Sodom and Gomorrah reached the point where God said “*their sin is very grievous*” and “*is waxen great*” (Gen. 18:20; 19:13).
 - b. They were so depraved and steeped in homosexuality that any male stranger was in danger (Gen. 19:5, “*may know them*” means to know sexually).
 - c. Jude wrote that “*Sodom and Gomorrah...giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire*” (Jude 7).

Conclusion

1. God has shown us His moral standard.
2. He has shown us the meaning of love and what true love looks like.
3. Men in the world are striving to pull us away from God’s righteous standard, but we must hold fast.
4. We must withstand the degradation of our current society so that when the Lord comes we may be found righteous.

Questions

For Lesson Nine

1. What have supporters of homosexuality done with God's standard of the marriage relationship?
2. What is God's opinion of homosexuality? Cite at least three passages that support your answer.
3. Is homosexuality natural? Explain.
4. Does God agree that a person is born homosexual? Explain.
5. What is the true standard for love?
6. Does homosexuality uphold that standard?
7. Is homosexuality loving? Explain.
8. Do changes in societies affected God's word?
9. If enough people disagree with the Bible does that mean it no longer applies to us?
10. In the Bible, what did God do with societies that fell too far away from His righteous standard? Give two examples.
11. What does this say about what will happen to our society if it does not repent?
12. How should Christians respond to the growing popularity of homosexuality in our country?

Gambling

Issues of Morality: Lesson Ten

Introduction

1. Scattered across America are a great many large and glamorous structures that strike awe in the minds of passers by.
 - a. The sheer greatness of their design attracts thousands. But inside is a world of iniquity.
 - b. What are these great creations of men? Casinos.
 - c. Places of gambling and all manner of wickedness. Places where the covetous and greedy assemble to bear their fruit and lose their livelihood.
2. By the use of these great structures men have been able to depict gambling as something glorious. But this is not the only deceiving device of men.
3. Gambling can be seen throughout society from the great casinos of Las Vegas to the seemingly innocent “church bingo nights.”
4. But we must not be deceived by glamour or the appearance of innocence. We must be made aware of the sinfulness of gambling and the dangers it poses for God’s people.

Discussion

I. **God’s Pattern**

- A. Since the beginning God has had a pattern for obtaining material goods.
 1. God has specified that men are to attain goods through honest labor.
 - a. Eph. 4:28: “*Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.*”
 - b. See also 2 Thess. 3:12; Luke 10:7.
 2. Where a man’s labor does not provide certain needs (if a farmer is not able to make his own clothes for example) God allows the practice of trade.
 - a. By this, one is able to attain what they need through buying & selling
 - b. He is able to use the profits of his own labors in order to purchase a service or product from another, thereby benefiting both parties.
 - c. Matt. 14:15; John 4:8.
 - d. Jesus used this principle to illustrate the kingdom of heaven in Matt. 13:44; Matt. 25:27.
 3. To take something in such a way that it harms another (without purchasing it or without permission) is called stealing and is strictly forbidden by God.
 - a. 1 Cor. 6:10: “*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of heaven...nor thieves, nor covetous...*”
 - b. In order to be right with God, a man must cease from stealing and work with his own hands (Eph. 4:28).
- B. Outside of the labor and trade which God says is good, He also expects men to show love toward one another.
 1. It may be the case that our neighbors cannot raise the funds in order to purchase the physical goods that they need.

2. In such cases God also allows, even expects, that men show love by giving of their own goods in order to help those who have need.
 3. This is not stealing on the part of the needy because the goods are given up willingly and out of love.
 - a. *“Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need..”* (1 John 3:17).
 - b. See also Eph. 4:28; Acts 2:45.
- C. According to God's pattern, the exchange of money or goods is always done in order to benefit one's neighbor.
1. When one gives to the needy he is willingly sacrificing of his own goods in order to supply the needs of others, with no hope of gain in return!
 2. In trade God demands that the exchange be fair so that both parties are equally benefited (Lev. 19:36). **No one gains at another's expense.**
 3. In every case, brotherly love is expected.
- II. The Sin of Covetousness
- A. Rather than respecting God's pattern men seek their own benefit, even at the expense of their neighbors.
1. Men desire their neighbor's goods in order to fulfill their own lusts rather than trying to benefit their neighbor.
 2. This is called covetous and is a most grievous sin.
- B. Covetousness: *“Greedy desire to have more, avarice”* (Thayer).
1. Avarice is, *“Insatiable or excessive desire for wealth or gain.”*
 2. **To consider purchasing something in order to fulfill one's needs is not a sin.** In such cases one practices honest trade where both parties are benefited.
 3. However, covetous is not concerned with need, only desire or lust. It cares not for the well-being of another, but the attaining of their goods; it is willing to gain at another's expense, contrary to God's pattern.
 4. Therefore we are commanded to *“let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints”* (Eph. 5:3).
- C. Though many people may be unaware of it, covetousness is a sin which permeates our society.
1. **People covet their neighbor's houses, expensive cars or TV's.**
 2. **Students covet their classmate's clothes.**
 3. The poor covet the wealth of the rich.
- D. This sin is seen throughout our society in another way as well; that is, in the practice of gambling.
- III. The Problem of Gambling
- A. We have seen God's pattern for labor, trade and sharing. Gambling violates all of these.
1. It violates the law of labor.
 - a. **Gambling is man's way of getting something for nothing, to get rich quick.**

- b. But God says, "...we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10).
 - c. God commands that we should desire to work with our hands, and that for the purpose of helping our neighbors (Eph. 4:28).
 - 2. It violates the law of Trade.
 - a. To desire something at the expense of another is sin.
 - b. Trade demands that equal payment be given for equal service or goods. Hence God's demand for honest scales in the O.T.
 - c. But gambling forsakes that pattern and allows one man to become rich at the expense of others. One's loss becomes another's gain.
 - d. The world may see nothing wrong with this, but the Christian must understand the ungodly nature of it and flee from it.
 - 3. The above two points are enough to prove that gambling also violates God's law of brotherly love.
 - a. Christians must be known for their love toward one another (John 13:35).
 - b. When we practice the sin of gambling we do not show love, but greed and covetousness.
 - c. By participating in such acts we tarnish name of Christ.
- B. The motivations or moving forces behind gambling are greed and covetousness.
 - 1. One gambles because he desires the wealth of his neighbor, he wants to get rich.
 - 2. The desire of God's people must not to be to get rich, but to use their own goods (whatever God has blessed them with) in order to provide the needs of others.
 - 3. As Paul said, "*I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'*" (Acts 20:35).
 - 4. One who practices the sin of gambling forsakes this principle in every way.
- C. No matter what men say about it or how they use it, gambling is covetousness, it is stealing, and it is wrong.
 - 1. "It's for a good cause" (cf. bingo or raffles for a church, a school, etc.) does not change that gambling is a violation of God's will!
 - a. Putting a "good twist" on sin never justifies its practice.
 - b. Whether for large (casinos) or small (bingo) amounts - Gambling is wrong!
 - 2. Gambling is not just taking a risk ("taking a risk" / "taking a gamble").
 - a. Taking an acceptable risk would be the farmer who invests in next year's crops. In such cases the farmer invests hard work, time, knowledge and money in order to bring about a profit. It is a risk, but his gain or loss is not affected by the gain or loss of another.
 - b. "In gambling one stands to gain at the loss of others - The deciding factor is some arbitrarily selected chance" (Mark A. Copeland).
- D. Consider these other passages which set forth principles that condemn the practice of gambling:
 - 1. 1 Tim. 6:9-10: "*But those who want to get rich fall into temptation...For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil...*"

2. Luke 12:15: *“Be on your guard against every form of greed.”*
3. Col. 3:5: *“Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth...covetousness which is idolatry.”*
4. Heb. 13:5: *“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have.”*

Conclusion

1. Gambling is a product of worldliness, an effort to lay up treasure on this earth.
2. It is a deceiver, a mocker, and a destroyer of lives, families, nations and souls.
3. The Christian must put to death a heart of covetousness and abstain from every form of greediness, including gambling.
4. Can you picture Jesus gambling?

Questions

For Lesson Ten

1. What do men in the world use in order to make gambling seem like a good thing? (see introduction)
2. Can Christians practice something just because it appears good? How can we know if something is really good or not?
3. What are three ways that God allows for men to exchange goods?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
4. What is a common principle seen in these three things? (See Point I., C.)
5. What does God call it when men take something in such a way that it harms their neighbor?
6. What is covetousness?
7. In what areas of our culture do we see evidence of covetousness?
8. Why is it wrong to covet our neighbor's goods?
9. How does gambling compare with God's pattern? Explain.
10. What are the major motivations behind gambling?
11. Is gambling acceptable if it is done for a good cause? Explain.
12. How does 1 Tim. 6:9-10 relate to those who gamble?

Profanity

Issues of Morality: Lesson Eleven

Introduction

1. At an early age we are made to believe that sins of the tongue “aren’t that bad.” Fowl language, though it may be a little crude, is ok as long as a person is “old enough.”
2. However, God teaches us that the sins of the tongue can result in some of the most devastating consequences.
3. Therefore, we would do well to consider the childhood song which says, “Be careful little mouths what you say.”
4. For if we are not careful, if we allow our mouths to be filled with filthy talk, God warns us saying, “*But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment*” (Matt. 12:36).
5. Let us consider what God’s word says about our speech that we may learn to avoid the sin of profanity and filthy talk, and learn how to glorify God with our lips.

Discussion

- I. Sin and the Tongue
 - A. The Danger of the Tongue
 1. Many people view the sins of the tongue as “less severe” or “less evil” than the sins committed with the rest of the body.
 2. On the contrary, God shows us that sin committed with the tongue, while equally condemning as sins committed with the rest of the body, can cause far greater damage in this physical life.
 3. Consider James 3:1-8
 - a. Of all the members of the body, the tongue, though one of the smallest, is **the hardest to control**: “*For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body*” (James 3:2).
 - b. And even though it is one of the smallest members of the body, it can do **great amounts of damage when misused**: “*Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell*” (James 3:5-6).
 - B. Therefore, the misuse of our tongues is just as evil as the vilest sins known to man.
 1. We sin when we speak evil of our fellow man (James 4:11).
 2. We sin when we lie (Rev. 21:8, 27).
 3. We sin when we speak error or things contrary to God’s word (1 Tim. 6:3-5).
 4. We sin when we gossip (1 Tim. 5:13).
 5. We sin when we allow foolish things to fill our speech (Eph. 3:5-4).
 6. And we sin when we allow idle or useless things to fill our speech (Matt. 12:36).

II. Profanity

- A. There is another sin of the tongue that we must be aware of, for not only is it condemning, but it is a sin committed by the majority in American society and it is increasing year by year.
1. That is the sin of *profanity*.
 2. Many people understand *profanity* to refer to the use of cuss words and swear words.
 3. To use this term in this way is appropriate, but it is important to understand why these things are called *profanity*.
- B. Profanity is defined as, “Characterized by irreverence for God (“profane”)...impious, base..., a profane act or utterance.”
1. Anything that defiles a person is profane.
 2. Vine defines it as “unhallowed or profane.” It also means to “pollute.”
 3. This word is used of error which some use to “pollute” the gospel message (2 Tim. 2:16). It is also used to refer to those who have a careless attitude or disregard things that are sacred.
 4. When we apply the term profanity to our speech we are speaking of that which “pollutes” our speech or causes it to be “unhallowed” and void of godly character.
 5. Therefore, profanity refers to those words which are vulgar, derogatory, filthy or degrading in nature.
 6. It also refers to subject matter that is not fitting for God’s people (i.e. dirty jokes, filthy, crude, or unwholesome subjects, etc.).
 7. Though the world may take these things lightly, if God’s people are to uphold His character they must avoid it; rather, they must flee it!

III. Proper Use of the Tongue

- A. God says much about the proper use of our tongues.
1. Just as He created all things good and to be used for good, so He gave us our mouths and our speech so that we may do good things with them.
 2. As priests under the New Covenant (Rev. 1:6), every Christian has a responsibility to offer up sacrifices to God, among which are “*the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name*” (Heb. 13:15).
 3. These are the sacrifices which we offer up to God as worship.
 4. Seeing that God has given us such a great gift with which to worship Him, we ought to take care that we do not allow the same mouth which praises God to be filled with profane speech which actually dishonors Him.
 5. James 3:9-11: “*With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so*”
- B. God shows us what we must avoid:
1. Eph. 4:29: “*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth...*”
 - a. A “corrupt word” is a word that is bad, vain, or worthless.
 - i. These words certainly include swear words, but also include vulgar humor, filthy talking etc.

- ii. This is especially important for young people as they commonly find themselves in situations where their friends get caught up in this kind of talking.
 - 2. Col. 3:8-9: “*But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another ...*”
 - 3. Eph. 5:3-4: “*But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting , which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*”
- C. God shows us the kind of speech we must have:
- 1. Eph. 4:29: “*...but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*”
 - a. Edification means to build up, to strengthen.
 - i. We must determine to use our tongue to build one another up.
 - ii. When we are with our companions in the world we must strive to use words which will benefit them and enlighten them to the righteousness of God.
 - b. To “*impart grace to the hearers,*” is to impart that which is acceptable, good, or that which has a divine influence.
 - i. This ought to be our goal with our speech.
 - ii. We must strive to rid our speech of anything that detracts from this.
 - c. For some, it may actually be embarrassing to talk about righteous things around people in the world. We must understand that we are not on this earth to please men, but to please God. Therefore, when we consider our speech and the subject matter of our discussions, let us do so with Gods’ will in mind.
 - 2. Col. 4:6: “*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt*”
 - a. Again, our speech is to be filled with those things that are attractive, wholesome, and gracious.
 - b. “*Seasoned with salt*” shows us that God is not talking about letting our speech be full of flattery, nor to be merely witty or clever.
 - c. Rather, to be pleasant. As salt makes meat pleasant to the taste, so our speech ought to be honed, considered carefully, and put forth so as to be pleasant or kindly to our hearers.
 - d. This is not the scratching of one’s ear as in 2 Tim. 4:3, but rather filling our speech with pleasantness and righteousness so as to not hinder our accountability nor the message of the gospel.
 - 3. It should be noted that profanity goes against these principles in every way.

Conclusion

- 1. God has given us a powerful tool in the use of our mouths, and He has instructed us in its proper use.
- 2. Let us seek to use our tongues according to God’s righteousness.
- 3. Let us seek to avoid all speech which defiles and profanes our mouths, hinders our influence in the world and turns the ears of others away from the truth of the gospel.

Questions

For Lesson Eleven

1. Does God care about how we talk?
2. What does Matt. 12:36 teach us about how careful we ought to be with our speech? Why?
3. How much does our speech affect our own lives and the lives of the people around us? Explain.
4. What does James mean in James 3:5-6 by, “...*the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity...*”?
5. List at least six ways we can sin with our tongues:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g. Can you think of any more?
6. What does “profane” mean?
7. How do we cause our speech to be “profane?”
8. What sort of things does God say we should avoid in our speech?
9. What sort of things does God say we should fill our speech with?
10. How do we cause our speech to be with grace, seasoned with salt?

Dishonesty

Issues of Morality: Lesson Twelve

Introduction

1. Honesty is one of the most discussed moral issues in the Bible.
2. **Throughout the Old Testament God stressed the importance of having “honest scales,” dealing justly and honestly with neighbors, and speaking the truth.**
3. The same emphasis is found in the New Testament.
4. But in the world, honesty has become more a matter of convenience than necessity.
 - a. Children are taught that if they cross their fingers they can get away with lying.
 - b. **Adults excuse their “white lies” saying that they don’t do much harm.**
 - c. **People even claim to lie out of love saying, “It is better to tell a lie that brings a smile than a truth that brings a tear.”**
5. But as we will study, honesty is not something that can be brushed aside so lightly.

Discussion

- I. The Source of Dishonesty
 - A. From the heart springs forth the issues of life (Prov. 4:23).
 1. God teaches us that everything a person does is a result of what is in his/her heart.
 2. Our desires, our motivations, our values, and our attitude all determine what we do and how we do it.
 3. The question we need to consider when dealing with the subject of honesty is, **what is the condition of a person’s heart who lies to and deceives people in order to get his own way?**
 - B. Those who seek the Lord have only honesty in their hearts.
 1. **God’s word is truth.**
 2. Jesus taught that the truth is what makes us free (John 8:32).
 3. **Also, we are told that “it is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18).**
 4. Any person who is truly seeking after the Lord will uphold these same characteristics in their own life, for it is written,
 - a. **“Be imitators of God as dear children” (Eph. 5:1).**
 - b. **And again, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6).**
 5. If our heart is right then this will be our character.
 - C. Those who have unrighteousness in their hearts will be full of dishonesty.
 1. Those with greed and covetousness in their hearts will try to cheat other people (Mark 7:21-22).
 2. Those with hypocrisy will try to deceive other people (Prov. 11:9; Isa. 9:17; 1 Pet. 2:1-2).
 3. Those with evil motives and seared consciences will simply lie and tell all manner of untruths in order to manipulate people, get their own way and to

avoid the consequences of all the other sins that fill their lives (John 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:2; Rom. 16:18).

4. **These are the ones God was speaking to in James 4:8: “*Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*”**

II. The Problem of Dishonesty

A. Lying

1. **Jesus clearly stated that “*You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32).**
2. However, there are many people who believe that if a lie is spoken with the best intentions and proves to make a person happy, then it is acceptable to tell it.
3. If we are going to be right with God we need to understand that just because something makes a person happy for the moment, it does not mean that it is a good thing (drugs and alcohol make people happy for a brief moment, but we have seen the damage they can do).
4. A lie may keep a person out of trouble for a time, but in the end every lie will be revealed and those who live by them will reap the consequences (Luke 12:2-3).
5. People who make lying a regular part of their lives are not helping themselves, nor are they free. Rather, they entrap themselves and confine themselves to having to remember each lie they tell if they do not want to get caught further down the road. They live in constant fear that someone will find them out.
6. There is only one true source of freedom—TRUTH!
 - a. No lie is of the truth (1 John 2:26).
 - b. **Only with the truth can a person’s conscience be free from the anxiety of being found out.**
 - c. Only when we willingly admit the truth can we begin to overcome the problems we are facing.
 - d. Only those who value truth will be able to see the gospel for what it is (the power of God unto salvation, Rom. 1:16) and take advantage of its saving power.
 - e. Therefore, only when we speak the truth can it make us emotionally free and only when we believe the truth of the gospel can it make us spiritually free.

B. Deception

1. Deception, though it involves lying, includes anything that misleads a person to believe something other than the truth.
2. **It is “that which gives a false impression, whether by appearance, statement, or influence” (Vines).**
 - a. When we act a certain way in order to make people think we are something **that we are not, it is deception. We refer to this as hypocrisy.** “*Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy*” (Luke 12:1).
 - b. When we try to make others believe that we are doing something when in fact we are not it is deception. For many, this begins as children, often stirring our veggies in order to make our parents think we ate some of them. It continues as we become adults acting like we are busy when our employer is around, but slacking when no one is looking.

3. When we cause a person to believe something that is not true, no matter what it is or why we are doing it, it is deception and it is a sin.
4. NOTE: Some people claim that God was telling Samuel to deceive Saul in 1 Samuel 16:1-5.
 - a. However, at no point was God telling Samuel to lie to Saul or to make Saul believe a lie.
 - b. God told Samuel to tell Saul that he was going to make a sacrifice and that is exactly what he did.
 - c. Lying and deception is a sin. Withholding information is not a sin. In fact, there are times when it is actually wise to withhold information (Prov. 10:19; 11:13).

C. “Dishonest Scales”

1. The subject of honesty and dishonesty also applies to those who “cheat” others.
2. In biblical times, people would often use scales to weigh a product in order to determine its value. Much like the way we purchase groceries today.
3. However, when a vender got greedy they would put extra weights on the scales in order to make the purchase item seem heavier than it really was. The heavier it seemed the more profit the vendor received.
4. God teaches us that “cheating” people in this manner is deception and it is harshly condemned throughout the Bible (Prov. 11:1; Prov. 20:10; Amos 8:4-6).
5. We must be honest in all of our dealings with other people.
 - a. Godliness demands it.
 - b. Brotherly Love demands it.
 - c. Matt. 7:12: “*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*”

D. Let your “Yes” be Yes” (James 5:12).

1. Dishonesty in the world has gotten to the point that many people will not believe their neighbor unless they swear an oath of some sort attesting to the truthfulness of their statement.
2. But God teaches us that we should not have this character within us.
3. In the world people need oaths to hold them accountable to their word, but Christians must have such honesty in their hearts that a simple “Yes” or “No” is just as binding as the greatest of oaths.
4. This is what God expects of His people.

III. Liars and the Judgment to Come

- A. Satan is the father of all lies: John 8:44
- B. Rev. 21:8, 27: All liars will burn in the lake of fire.

Conclusion

1. Dishonesty is a plague among men.
2. As God’s people, lest us strive to uphold His character in all things. Let us “*speak the truth in love*” and flee all manner of dishonesty and deception (Eph. 4:15).

Questions

For Lesson Twelve

1. What are some signs of dishonesty that can be seen in the actions of little children?
2. Give an example of where adults may manifest that same character.
3. From what do the issues of life come? What does this mean?
4. In terms of honesty, what is the character of those who have good hearts? Explain.
5. What is the character of those who have evil in their hearts? Explain.
6. Explain why each of these three items is sinful:
 - a. Lying:
 - b. Cheating:
 - c. Deception:
7. Some people believe that if they lie they can get away with doing evil things.
 - a. Is this true?
 - b. Even if they “get away with it” for the moment, ultimately have they escaped the consequences of their actions? Explain.