

UPON THE ROCK

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Volume 9 Issue 6

Moral Issues in Today's Society

Gay Marriage - Page 2

The Inhumanity of Humanism - Page 5

A Victimless Crime? - Page 9

Sex Before Marriage - Page - 13

The Ship of Truth Must Sail in Troubled Waters - Page 17

Respect for Marriage - Page 22

Can A Christian Still Be An Evolutionist? - 25

Abraham Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation - 28

Upon the Rock is published bimonthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians

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Gay Marriage

Brandon Britton

Queer Eye For The Straight Guy, The Ellen Degeneres Show, Will & Grace, Queer as Folk, LOGO (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender television network) and on we could go. What a difference a decade makes! In ten years we have gone from a same gender kiss on Roseanne to an openly homosexual character on Ellen, to a homosexual themed show in Will & Grace, to homosexual adoption, to homosexual civil unions, to homosexual religious leaders, and now homosexual marriage. In one generation we have redefined our vocabulary from sodomite, to homosexual, to gay, to alternate lifestyle and soon it will be just plain normal. Would you agree this is a subject that will not go away and therefore we desperately need to give attention to it?

Is Homosexuality Really Wrong?

Some would have us to believe that the answer to this question depends upon various circumstances. In Arab countries? Absolutely! In most European countries? No. In the 1950's? Definitely! In 2004? Maybe not. In Pulaski, Tennessee? Certainly. In San Francisco? No. For me? Without a doubt. For you/others? Maybe not. There is only one way to know and one place to go for the true answer to this question...the Bible, and yes it does give a definite answer. To answer this question we will focus upon Romans 1:18-32. This section begins a listing of what can be called the Gentile sins. Later in the book, Paul condemns the sins of the Jews, but for now he is focused upon the Gentile wickedness. Paul explains that the wrath of God will be revealed from heaven on ALL unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; not just against homosexuality (v. 18). The reason he gives is because men who have the truth and know it, but reject it and refuse to live in it and instead practice unrighteousness,

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Hear - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).

Believe - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).

Repent - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).

Confess - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).

Be baptized - (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

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are without excuse (v. 19-20). They respond with arrogance and become darkened because they think they are enlightened (v. 21-22). When man thinks this way, he changes God and makes Him in his own image (v. 23). The next step after rejecting the God revealed through His truth and reshaping Him to fit your own liking, is to turn to immorality (v. 24-27). Because of the lust in their hearts they began to dishonor their bodies between themselves (v. 24). God allows them to practice their shameful behavior; and even their women began to go against nature with these lustful actions (v. 26). The men also burned with lust to the extent that they turned away from women to other men (v. 27). Paul indicates they made a deliberate decision to put God out of their minds and lives and therefore He gave them over to do these things which were not acceptable (v. 28). You will notice that this rebuke was not just for the homosexual, but toward all lust driven immorality! Verses 29-31 continue to describe the spiritual downward spiral of those who practice these things: Debate (strife), malignity (bad character, depravity of life), whisperers (a secret slanderer), haters(ful) to God (exceptionally wicked), spiteful (one who says or does shameful things being lifted up by pride or arrogance), without understanding (willful foolishness), without natural affection (hard hearted to family), implacable (obstinate, will never change their mind). Although this condemnation is not limited to homosexuality, it is certainly the main focus of his condemnation of the Gentiles sins. His final decree is that they will suffer the wrath of God, being found worthy of death (v. 32).

Homosexuality, Rebellion and Fornication

The heart of the sin of homosexuality is rebellion. It is a rebellion against God's design for the genders and a rebellion against God's design for the home. Paul explains that those who practice this sin know the truth and the consequences of their lifestyle, yet they still choose to disregard their Creator and practice a lustful and immoral

lifestyle (v. 18, 21, 22, 28, 32). Is it any wonder then that the news is reporting the rebellion against the laws of the land and the will of the people concerning so-called gay marriage? If they have no respect for His law, why would we think they would respect our laws? Their attitude is one of arrogance, rebellion and total disregard for the law. Their behavior is ILLEGAL and opposed to the will of the people. Can you imagine the response if the Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, were to disregard the gun control laws and begin issuing gun licenses to any who wanted them, regardless of whether they met the standards of the law? Would he be described as brave and courageous like the mayors and governors who illegally granted and performed marriage ceremonies for homosexual couples? He would likely be removed from office. So what is the difference? The question is not just one of homosexuality, it also has to do with lust, immorality and fornication as a whole. Homosexuality is just one form of fornication, all of which are condemned equally in the Scriptures. Whatever our attitude is toward the adulterous wife, the fornicating teen and the husband who lusts, should be our attitude toward the homosexual. IT IS NOT RIGHTEOUS TO HATE HOMOSEXUALS. I would hate to lose my soul eternally because I had hatred in my heart for those guilty of this particular sin, while completely ignoring the equally condemning sins of lasciviousness, adultery and lust. As for the argument that a person is born that way; God would not create a person to be a homosexual and then condemn them for it. That is just like the Calvinist doctrine of pre-election; some are chosen to be saved, others to be lost. But for the sake of argument, let's say a person is born homosexual (WHICH HE IS NOT); it would still be wrong to fornicate. Heterosexuals are born attracted to the opposite sex, but that does not allow us to practice immorality by committing sins of the flesh or by lusting. Also, what do you then do with the person who says he was born with a heart to love 5 women? What about the person who says God created them to be attracted to children or to animals? Do we legalize these

the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the imposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the divine purpose, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.

In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Abraham Lincoln

Happy Thanksgiving

their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well as the iron and coal as of our precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in

behaviors as well, despite the fact that the Bible has just as clearly condemned them as homosexuality? The obvious answer is no.

“Gay Marriage”

Truth be told, the term “gay marriage” is an oxymoron (figure of speech where contradictory words are combined). The Lord has defined marriage in both the Old and New Testaments. Genesis 1 and 2, along with Matthew 19, clearly define marriage as between one man and one woman, joined together by God, and separated only by death. This definition of marriage is neither cultural, social or optional, it is Divine. The Lord created/designed the home/marriage, and revealed to us the acceptable elements and ingredients. Man is then faced with a choice: Do I accept God’s standards and limits or do I go my own way? If we choose to rebel against His pattern we will reap the consequences. “For he that soweth to his flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Galatians 6:8).

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The Inhumanity of Humanism

Patrick Morrison

The humanistic philosophy has plagued man since the very beginning of time. Though not formalized until the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the roots of humanism have been traced back beyond the ancient Greek philosophers all the way to the dawning of the Chinese civilization. Though the fundamental teachings of humanism can be found in every period of man’s history, its effects have probably never been more far-reaching and more influential than they are in our society at this point in time. Championed as a movement that would unite humanity, that would seek the greatest

good of mankind, that would right most (if not all) social injustices, humanism is, in reality, one of the most inhumane, damnable heresies that has ever been brought forth. While it is not the intention of this short article to be a full-scale treatise of humanism, we do wish to examine some of the core beliefs of this insidious evil, and the sway it holds over society, even as it affects religion.

The Basic Tenets of Humanism

Vital to the overall understanding of the humanistic philosophy is its bedrock affirmation that “the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values” (Humanist Manifest I, 1933) [for sake of brevity, I will simply refer to Humanist Manifesto I, Humanist Manifesto II, and Humanist Manifest III as HMI, HMII and HMIII from henceforth. These sources can be found with a simple web search]. As stated in their own words, “We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural...As nontheists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity” (HMII). Humanists “recognize nature as self-existing,” and humans as “an integral part of nature, the result of unguided evolutionary change” (HMIII). Again, hear them speak: “But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species” (HMII). All other tenets of humanism start from this major premise—that man is the product of chance and evolution, and as such is not the crowning jewel of a Divine creation.

With the idea of the supernatural being discarded, it only follows that humanists would insist that “the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected” (HMI). In the estimation of the humanist, the denial of the immortal soul also does away with thoughts of life hereafter. The idea of an eternal existence somewhere is, to the humanist, “both illusory and harmful” (HMII). Therefore, “the complete realization of human personality [is] to be the end of man’s life And seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now”

Christ lied and the evolutionists are correct, or we can believe that the words Jesus Christ spoke are true, and therefore evolution is 100% wrong. The belief in theistic evolution allows for the Savior to be called a liar!

Ah, but you say, “Adam was just a mythological creature. We know today that man originated from a Neanderthal-type creature.” However, if this is true, why did the inspired apostle Paul pen these words: “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*” (1 Cor. 15:22), and then in reference to Christ he wrote, “*And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit*” (1 Cor. 15:45)? If Adam and Eve are merely mythological, does this mean that this “last Adam,” Jesus Christ, was a mythological creature, as well?

Reference: Taylor, Robert (1974), “More Problems for Theistic Evolution,” *Gospel Advocate*, January 3.

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Abraham Lincoln’s Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1863

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and to provoke

than Jesus, then it seems the system has ceased to be evolution and has become devolution, at least in one sense? (Taylor, 1974).

Today, this theory appears more like “devilution” than devolution. As long as we are tossing aside Scripture, we might as well get out our scissors and cut out all references to the Creation, starting with the Gospel recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Jesus Christ Himself made reference to the Creation when He stated in Matthew 19:4 (c.f. Mark 10:6): *“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female.”* These words indicate that Adam and Eve had been on the Earth “from the beginning of Creation” (Mark 10:6). Of course we also would have to throw out John, because the first few verses of chapter one review the beginning and Creation. Other Scriptures such as Acts 4:24, Acts 17:25, Romans 1:20, Colossians 1:16, 1 Timothy 2:13, Hebrews 1:2, 1 Peter 4:19, and Revelation 4:11 also would be called into question if the Creation account is merely a nice “story” and not historically accurate. As a matter of fact, the only books that do not refer to the Creation in some form are the books of Jude, Philemon, and 2 and 3 John!

Additionally, if we do not accept that God created the Heaven and the Earth in six literal days, then we are making Jesus Christ our Savior, a liar. Jesus stated: *“But from the beginning of the Creation male and female he made them”* (Mark 10:6), affirming that Adam and Eve were on the Earth since the beginning of Creation. Paul affirmed in Romans 1:20-21 that the things God had made had been “perceived” even “since the Creation of the world.” According to evolutionists, man did not come into the picture until about 3-4 million years ago. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that if the Earth is supposedly 5-6 billion years old, then the last 3-4 million is not, by any stretch of the imagination, “from the beginning.” Rather, it is “from the end.” Therefore we are left with a choice: either Jesus

(HMI). Having then cast off any idea of a higher power, and with it, a supreme law, and having no concern about eternal reward or punishment, man then becomes a law unto himself. “Ethical values are derived from human need and interest as tested by experience” (HMIII). Again, according to humanism, “ethics is autonomous and situational needing no theological or ideological sanction” (HMII). Rather than attributing the value of life to its having been created in the image of the Divine, humanism circumvents such thinking by merely stating that human life has “inherent worth and dignity” (HMIII). Humanists must attach value to human life in order for their system of morals and ethics to have any meaning. They assign such value arbitrarily, however. While supposedly upholding the “dignity of the individual person,” humanism nonetheless considers abortion as an inalienable right, as well as “the right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide” (HMII). What happened to the “inherent worth and dignity” of the millions of babies slaughtered every year, or the countless aged who are ushered into a premature grave in the name of so-called progress? Ah, consistency, thou art a jewel! It comes down to their belief that “all persons should have a voice in developing the values and goals that determine their lives” (HMII).

The Influence of Humanism in Society

Having placed man upon the throne which God alone has right to occupy, our society has essentially become a world in which survival of the fittest is a fitting mantra. In a world that has long declared “God is dead” (though humanists would never aver such, for they never held God to be alive in the first place), the humanistic philosophy has spread like a wild fire in a drought-laden prairie. No God to whom we must give answer, no higher law by which to conduct our lives, no immortal soul that will spend an eternity in hell for failing to abide by the commands of the Creator—is it any wonder, then, that our world is falling faster and further into absolute chaos? The society in which

we find ourselves has given itself over to the fulfillment of every desire imaginable. Take note of the consequences of trying to forget God and His law (Romans 1:19-32; God gave them up!). We have humanism to thank for the rank hedonism prevalent in our world. We have humanism to thank for the degradation of the moral fabric of this nation. We have humanism to thank for the increase in violent crime, the divorce rate, children born out of wedlock, lack of respect for those in positions of authority, and on and on the list could continue. After all, if man is merely the product of unguided evolutionary change, and if man has no eternal soul about which to be concerned, then let us “eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Corinthians 15:32). If humanists are correct in their assessments of the nature of man, then anything goes (see Judges 17:6).

The Influence of Humanism on the church

Religion is being influenced more and more to imbibe the prevailing doctrine of “you believe what you want to believe, and I’ll believe what I want to believe, and we will agree to disagree when our beliefs contradict.” Humanism is influencing many major religious bodies to abandon any vestige of an objective standard of truth (which standard does exist [John 17:17]). Some are attempting to hold hands with both humanism and Christianity by advocating theistic evolution. While those who would propose this theory are trying to gain favor with both humanists and those who believe in the Biblical account of the creation, they in actuality set themselves at variance with both sides. No man can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). Such fence-straddling makes the Lord sick to his stomach (Revelation 3:16). With humanism being the popular social, ethical, moral, political and philosophical thrust of our time, many religious institutions are afraid to reject this dangerous and demonic doctrine. Myriads of so-called Christians are following a multitude to do evil (Exodus 23:2) for fear of rejection, loss of numbers and loss of revenue. Such is contrary to the spirit of Christianity (see 2 Timothy

Bible and evolutionary theory be true? People clinging to both the Bible and evolution are commonly known as “theistic evolutionists.” “Theistic” comes from the Greek *theos*, which means “God.” Thus, theistic evolutionists believe God does exist, but they also hold to the theory of evolution as true. They rationalize their beliefs by stating that “yes, God created the heavens and the Earth,” but then He used (or allowed) evolutionary processes to produce the Universe we see today.

Thus, “Bible believers” find themselves in the awkward position of compromising the opening chapters of the Bible. If Genesis 1-11 is tossed aside as merely a mythological story, then we must toss out the entire Bible because the one major theme that is taught throughout the Bible is redemption. Man's relationship with God started at the pinnacle of Creation week in the Garden and degenerated from there. Christians need to be fully aware that theistic evolution teaches that man started out at the bottom and worked his way to the top (via the old amoeba-to-man story). Therefore, either man started at the top and fell, as the Bible indicates, or he started at the bottom and rose to the top, as evolution supposes. Both cannot be correct! The prophets long ago declared the fall of humans, and the resulting need for a Savior. Scripture indicates that this was the reason for Christ's death – to bring men back into a covenant relationship with God. If men truly did not fall as described in the Creation account, then why did Jesus Christ, the Son of God, come to this planet and suffer a cruel death on the cross? Additionally, consider the following:

Surely evolution will not have to reverse itself and concede that it reached its zenith with the birth of the Christ child a long, long time ago. Surely this colossal system will not have to concede that it is less able now to produce a greater than Jesus than it did produce two thousand years ago. If evolution is not now able to produce a greater

Can A Christian Still Be An Evolutionist?

Brad Harrub

If one were to believe everything the scientific community has offered regarding man's origins, we would find that very few theories include acts by a supernatural Creator. In fact, scientists are quick to point out that the Universe took billions of years to form, and thus it would be absurd to believe that it was created in just six days. For instance, consider what Thomas Hayden recently wrote when he added another “certainty” of life, besides taxes and death. His effort to shore up the ever-faltering theory of evolution was the cover story of the July 29, 2002 issue of U.S. News & World Report. In explaining “how evolution works, and why it matters more than ever,” Hayden stated: “It's an everyday phenomenon, a fundamental fact of biology as real as hunger and as unavoidable as death” (2002, 133[4]:43).

Sadly, this type of grandstanding and propagandizing in the media occurs all too often. And people by the millions accept it as the “final word” on the subject – without any real knowledge as to what the evidence truly reveals. Even within the church, Christians often subconsciously find themselves favoring science over the Bible. We have forgotten the Truth on the matter, which can be summed up simply with the first ten words that appear in the Bible: “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1, emp. added). If this is not true, then every word that follows should be called into question.

Because of the prevailing idea of an ancient Cosmos, many people have tried to find ways to fit evolution and its billions-of-years time frame into the biblical account of creation. In essence, they still espouse belief in God and the Bible, but they also pledge a great deal of allegiance to science and the evolutionary theory. As the old adage says, they want to “have their cake and eat it, too.” But can both the

1:7; Revelation 20:8). Should the church continue to cower to the bullying of an increasingly fashionable philosophy, she will soon (if not already) find herself bowing the knee to political correctness rather than Him Who sits on the throne of the heavens. May God grant us more courage, that “with all boldness [we] may speak thy word” (Acts 4:29).

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“A Victimless Crime?”

Phil Grear

Our English word “pornography” comes from two Greek words: “porne” (immoral sex) and “graphe” (to write). It literally means “immoral sex writing”. *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary* defines it as, “the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement.” Pornography is the use of the immoral sex images to stimulate sexual passions.

Pornography is a multi-billion dollar business that uses magazines, books, movies, etc. to generate huge incomes for those with no other motive than to exploit people for profit. It used to be confined to “adult book stores” and “adult theaters,” but no longer needs be sneaked into the home in a brown wrapper. It is now readily available at home over the television or computer screen.

Many attempt to justify pornography under the heading of “free speech.” Those who express concern are immediately accused of “censorship.” We are told not to force our morality on others. “You should just mind your own business. If you don’t like it, don’t look at it, but don’t tell others they can’t.” But this ignores the fact that we

must live in the society it helps create. Our wives and daughters have to live in a world where too many men have corrupted their minds with this trash. Even though we never read or view pornographic material, our world is shaped by it, and that makes it our business. And it's supporters should stop trying to censor us when we express our opinion.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PORNOGRAPHY?

The word "pornography" never appears in the Bible, but it does have much to say about the subject. The Scriptures warn us repeatedly about controlling our thoughts. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). We become that on which we feed our minds.

Jesus explicitly said, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Adultery is always a thought before it is an action.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8). We must feed our minds on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. None of these terms accurately and fairly describe the moral filth produced by the pornographic industry.

It is impossible to separate what we think from who we are. Eventually our thoughts will become actions in one way or another. They may lead some to greater extremes than others, but none is unaffected by his thinking. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications... wickedness... lasciviousness, an evil eye. All these evil things come from within,

demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth" (I Timothy 4:1-3). Some began to teach that marriage itself was a distraction from serving God. The problem with this picture is that celibacy is never portrayed in the Scriptures as God's best for a deeper spiritual life. In fact, the reason for marriage was so that man would not be alone (Genesis 2:18). The truth of the matter is that marriage itself relates to things that are deeply spiritual. God used the marriage relationship to teach us about His love for the church (Ephesians 5:25-28). The kind of love that man is to have for his wife and the unity that is to exist, "two shall be one flesh" is the love and unity that is to be in the church of Christ.

The key to honoring marriage is to honor and respect the will of God. We proclaim to be a people who know God. The Gentiles knew God but they did not glorify as God. They did not live according to the will of God (Romans 1:21). If we truly know Him we will honor and respect His will. God said, "The bed is to be undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4). We must live our lives not serving the flesh. "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:13). We must control our desires and not allow Hollywood, the music industry, and the media to control our thinking about love and marriage. We must be consistent in our study of God's Word to know and honor His Word!

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fornicators and adulterers.

We need to listen to the warning that God has set forth in His word as to how we are to honor marriage.

At the close of the Old Testament God spoke to man's cry as to why the Lord will not accept his weeping and tears, the prophet says, "Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant." (Malachi 2:14). How men treat their wives is singled out as a reason the Lord refuses to answer their prayers. It seems Peter had this in mind, when he said, "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7). So we have two accounts as to how the Lord refuses to bless a man where the wife is being mistreated in some form. However, Malachi points out that the man's attitude towards his wife is only an indicator of a much deeper problem. The prophet calls attention to the prevailing arrogance in the man that has spilled over into all his life. Because of his lack of respect for the law of God it has effected how he treats others. It is true for us today, that much of our problems we are dealing with in marriage are a result of man's lack of respect for the will of God. When we turn our hearts to seek the will of God and put them into practice, we will then see our marriages improve.

Part of our modern day problem is that we have drifted far from God's plan for marriage. But this problem did not begin yesterday. It seems that every generation has wanted to change God's arrangement. The first century church struggled with men wanting to change God's law. "Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of

and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23). Filling our minds with moral filth will defile us within, and that defilement will come out.

WHY IS PORNOGRAPHY DANGEROUS?

Some say pornography is harmless and wonder why we create such a fuss about it. "With all of the real problems in the world what's the harm in looking at a few pictures?" It is a valid question with some valid answers.

Pornography is dangerous because of its demands. It demands money that could be better spent. It demands thought processes that should be devoted to higher pursuits. But its real danger is that it can create an addiction that demands satisfaction. What starts as seemingly harmless "girlie" magazines can progress to more hard-core material in order to achieve the same excitement. Not everyone who reads a soft-core magazine becomes addicted, but each one who starts may be one who will.

Pornography is dangerous because it is destructive. Marriages have suffered, even been ripped apart, because of pornography's tragic influence. Children have been deprived of parents. It has even led some of its victims to suicide.

But its greatest destructive power is seen in what it does to a person's spiritual interests. The sexual titillation and excitement can overwhelm spiritual thinking and drive its victim away from God. Far too many formerly faithful Christians have been lost to this terrible plague.

Pornography is dangerous because it is degrading. Obviously it is degrading to women. She who was made by God to be man's help meet and life partner is demeaned into nothing more than a toy or object to be used for his selfish interests. She is not loved, but

merely used to incite male passions and lust. She becomes a thing, not a person.

In some ways the greatest degradation comes to the man involved in it. He who was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) becomes an animal living for his passions. He is enslaved to sin rather than free in Christ

Pornography is dangerous because of its destiny. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness...” (Galatians 5:19-22). Pornography is mental adultery and fornication. Uncleanness refers to impure deeds, words, thoughts, and desires. Lasciviousness is shameless conduct designed to arouse wrongful sexual desires. Pornography is a form of all four of these. The apostle Paul says, “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Pornography will keep people from heaven, and the only other eternal destiny is hell.

CONCLUSION

Those who argue that pornography is a victimless crime are either naïve, ignorant, or downright dishonest. It is no more victimless than any other form of sin. It victimizes the millions of people enslaved to it, the millions used in its production, and the millions who will lose their souls because of it. Let us shun it like the plague it is.

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The Ship of Truth Must Sail in Troubled Waters.

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RESPECT FOR MARRIAGE

Larry G. Reynolds

Hebrews 13:4 states that, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” This is what God says about marriage and keeping it pure. Our society is declaring otherwise. In July, 2004 an article appeared in the USA Today, titled; “Let people define marriage” by Wayne Allard, Republican Senator from Colorado. His concern was that the state courts were trying to redefine marriage to include same-sex marriages. He noted that 12 states attempted to force the population and the legislature to accept same-sex marriages. Because of his concern he introduced in the Senate an amendment to the Constitution to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Now think about this for a moment, “A Constitutional amendment to define marriage”? The reason we are having this problem is because man is leaving God. We may call ourselves a God fearing nation. But we are not honoring what he has said about marriage. God the author of the marriage institution has already settled this question. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall be come one flesh” (Genesis 2:21-24). God said that marriage is to be held in honor by all and that He will judge the

sorely upon the members of the Lord's church (see Acts 3-5). Peter and John were arrested and sternly warned by the Sanhedrin to speak and teach no more in the name of Jesus (see Acts 4:18). In response to the "gag order" issued by the authorities, Peter and John concluded that they "...ought to obey God rather than men" and they went right on preaching (Acts 5:29). Peter "got it" but it was not without going astray a few times! To sum it all up, the attitude of the early church was this: "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." (Acts 5:41-42).

Paul was the subject of persecutions on every hand and literally in almost every city he visited. In his second epistle to the Corinthians, he summarized the antagonism displayed by the world toward the truth by saying, "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

What ought we to expect when we stand for the truth? To ask the question is to answer it when we remember who it is we serve! After rebuking Peter for being mindful of the things of men more than the things of God, Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it." (Matthew 16:24-25). He knew painfully well that

Sex Before Marriage

Mark Reynolds

The Bible has much to say about premarital sex. It is plain in showing us the only place where sex is acceptable, and even exalted: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). The Bible generally uses the word *porneia*, which is translated *fornication* when talking about sexual acts outside of legal marriage (Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament), which would certainly include sex before marriage. "But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication..." (Acts 15:20). The inspired Paul included fornication in the works of the flesh: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness" (Galatians 5:19). Sex before marriage is just as wrong as adultery, homosexuality, and other forms of fornication, because they all involve having sex with someone to whom one is not married. The punishment for sex before marriage is just as severe as all other sin: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). These things alone should cause one to abstain from sex until he is married, but consider also some other matters.

Sex is Powerful

Just think: People are born from sex, and people can die from sex. There are 14,000 new infections of HIV/AIDS every day, and it is a disease of young people with one-half of the five million new infections each year occurring among people ages 15-24 (until.org/statistics.shtml). The radio program "Point of View" on

WFCJ radio Dayton, Ohio reported December 10, 2004 that teenage girls who have sex are two times more likely to commit suicide than girls who practice abstinence and teenage boys who have sex are seven times more likely to commit suicide than boys who are sexually abstinent.

A strong bond is formed with each person with whom a person has sex. “What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:16-18). That is why it is so important for one to form this bond only with one’s spouse. Each time a person has sex with another, he/she gives a part of himself/herself to that person. Sex before marriage means broken hearts and broken bonds.

The problem with thinking birth control makes sex safe is that it fails to realize the emotional damage done to those who have sex before they are married. Often times you can see it on a young person’s face, and in his/her behavior. Just as a seatbelt in a car can help protect you from death, it does not mean that you will not suffer if involved in an accident; in fact you could still die. Even if birth control does its job, a person who has sex before marriage will still suffer. Sex is powerful. It will change the life of an individual for the worse if it is not kept in its proper place, marriage.

Argument Answered

One of the most common arguments for sex before marriage goes something like this: “You wouldn’t buy a car without first driving it.” The implication is that like a car a young boy and young woman must first try each other out before committing to one another. Let’s explore this “logic.”

Because he failed to hear the Master’s warnings that truth was a lightning rod that attracts criticism and not a passport to safety. We will presently examine this event in more detail.

Matthew records the events that surrounded this stern rebuke of Peter: “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He [Jesus] turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.’” (Matthew 16:21-23). Jesus did not rebuke Peter until Peter rebuked Jesus! Note the Master’s words “...you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” God did not promise peace and safety to those who proclaimed truth, in fact, He promised just the opposite. In order for Peter to expect something different, he had to turn His ears away from Jesus and listen to other voices.

So we see that the early disciples were much like you and I. They sometimes didn’t “get it” even though they were taught directly by the Master Teacher. Sometimes they were reminded gently and from time to time they had to be sternly rebuked. So it is no wonder that we sometimes forget the valuable lessons that the Scriptures teach and further that we need reminders and encouragement from time to time. It is good and right that we should pray for peace and safety as we live and proclaim the truth, but it is erroneous to believe this is something that we can expect! If Jesus was not exempt from the lightning bolts of the world, then there is no way that we can expect to be treated any differently!

The Early Church and the Apostles were Vehemently Opposed. Scarcely was the first sermon complete before persecutions came

the opposite! In point of fact, the scriptures say explicitly, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” (2Timothy 3:12).

Jesus Warned that Truth would be Vehemently Opposed. He taught this fact to His closest followers at the very outset of His ministry. As He sent them on the limited commission, He warned them of persecutions that would confront them on every hand saying, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master.” (Matthew 10:24). If He [Jesus] was the Teacher and Master and He suffered persecutions, then it should be obvious that his followers should expect the same. His predictions came true as the apostles spread the word of the coming kingdom; they were persecuted in many places because of their stand for truth - just like their Master. At the end of His ministry, He told this same group of disciples, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.” (John 15:18). Just to put this in perspective, Jesus warned that the truth was not a ticket to peaceful transport, but rather it was a lightning rod which would draw criticism to its adherents just as it drew criticism to Himself!

Perhaps we sometimes mistakenly think that the apostles of Jesus were in some ways a lot different from us. Maybe we think that they “got it” the first time Jesus spoke these words or taught this lesson. However, if that is what we think, we are wrong. The apostles were men of human feelings and appetites just like we are. They sometimes did not hear the lessons of Christ even though they were first hand witnesses to their delivery. Perhaps that is why Jesus frequently said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Matthew 11:15; 13:9; 13:43). Peter was commended for believing that Jesus was the Son of God (Matthew 16:13-19) but this was apparently only moments before receiving the stern rebuke, “Get behind me, Satan!” (Matthew 16:23) Why did Jesus speak in this manner to Peter?

I would like to be in front of a person in a grocery store who believes the above quibble. If he were shopping for apples I would pick up the apple before him, take a bite and decide it wasn't to my liking and place it in his grocery basket. I would like to see if he truly believes that apple is still as appealing as it was before I took a bite. Most likely, the same “logic” would not apply. That apple will never be the same, and it would not be as desirable to anyone.

Once a non-married couple “tries it out” they will never be the same, no matter if they found one another suitable or not. Further, just as an apple with a bite mark from another person is not nearly as appealing, the attraction of a person who has already given himself/herself to another is never as strong and beautiful as it once was.

Still further, statistics show that couples who wait until they are married to make love are more likely to remain together until death (Bible.com). On the other hand, if one says he needs to “try out a woman” before he marries her is already telling her something about his character, or lack thereof. He is telling her that sex is more important to him in that relationship than anything else, and if it is not up to his liking, or ever ceases to be, the relationship will end, or in the very least suffer. Don't fall for this ridiculous argument!

What Can We Do?

First, as parents, we can tell our children that it is still possible to remain chaste, and must share with them the fact that it is not just a physical gift to be given to their spouse, but also an emotional gift. A way to help in this is to keep them from sexually suggestive movies, websites, books, and the like. The more they listen to others tell them “everybody is doing it,” the more likely they are to give in. It used to be the norm that a person would remain pure until marriage. We need to help our children realize that they are normal when they

remain pure, even if in the minority.

Second, as parents, we can help paint a picture of the beauty of sex in marriage. Yes, that's right; we need to show that sex is a wonderful gift from God within the God-given parameters. It is a strong temptation to paint sex as an ugly, awful thing to try to deter our children from it, but if they take this attitude into their marriage, trouble is ahead. The book of Song of Solomon paints a divine picture of married love. When your child reaches the appropriate age and maturity level it would be good to study this grand book of the Bible with him/her.

Third, as parents, we can make it easier for our children to save themselves for marriage by never giving them the opportunity to be alone long enough to be tempted. Some who will read this remember the days when "dating" was called "courting." This is a word and practice we need to get back to. Inherent in the word "courting" is the idea of judging, which is exactly what needs to take place. The purpose of courting another is to judge whether or not he/she would be suitable as a spouse. Our teenagers do not need to be alone in a car, house, or anywhere else to make this type of judgment. They can still have personal conversations out on the front porch or in the next room with the door open.

Today, children are allowed to be alone with one of the opposite sex for extended periods of time, even allowed to go to their bedroom to "work on their homework." Parents who allow this time alone should not be surprised when their child begins having sex. Many have changed their attitude towards dating these days, but God still has not.

Young people, do not put yourself in a situation where the temptation will be stronger to give in. You are worth waiting for, and anybody

who tries to convince you otherwise is not the one for you. Remember the person you are interested in is somebody's little girl/boy, and will be someone's future spouse. Respect your boyfriend's/girlfriend's parents, respect your boyfriend/girlfriend, and most of all, respect God's Word.

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The Ship of Truth Must Sail in Troubled Waters

Jim Bullington

As introduction to this article, consider the following event from the life of Christ:

On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" (Mark 4:35-40).

Did the disciples think that the storm would not affect them simply because they were in the boat with Jesus? Did they think that this would entitle them to smooth sailing at all times and in all places? If they did they certainly were wrong! Should disciples expect the spiritual storms to abate merely because we are in the ship of truth? Are we as believers entitled to safe and peaceful passage regardless of our spiritual destinations? Well, the New Testament teaches quite