

Gospel Relationships: Sexual Immorality and My Family

Session 5

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Matthew 10:28-33; Romans 1:21-25; 1 Corinthians 6:18

Session Outline

1. Flee from Sexual Immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18)
2. Dishonoring of the Body (Romans 1:21-25)
3. Fear God (Matthew 10:28-33)

Theological Theme

Sex is a gift given by God to be enjoyed within the confines of marriage between one man and one woman for life.



Leader Guide

Gospel Relationships: Sexual Immorality

Introduction

- ❓ When was a time you did something that was helpful for another person, but they felt as though you were hurting them?
- ❓ What were the circumstances? What was the outcome?

Can you imagine a doctor who would withhold a cancer diagnosis because it is uncomfortable to tell the patient? What if a construction worker refused to stop a pedestrian from walking straight toward a deep pit because they were afraid of offending them? What if you were on a business trip and your neighbor noticed a criminal breaking into your home where your family slept but decided he didn't want to overstep his bounds by calling you?

The Bible's teaching on sexuality is becoming increasingly disregarded or scorned in our culture, yet we are called to tell the truth about these things, even when they are offensive.

Session Summary

The Bible is clear on matters of sexuality and gender. Christians must flee from sexual immorality, know the truth about God's design, and be willing to lovingly tell the truth about what God's Word says concerning these matters.

Whether it's a member who has announced they are gay, a brother being unfaithful to his wife, or a young woman seducing a man, the Bible tells us to flee from sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18). The Bible speaks against adultery, homosexuality, and impurity. However, it is important to recognize where we may flee from sin but not from the sinner. God values each of us and wants us to share the good news of the gospel.

1. Flee from Sexual Immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18)

In one sense, sin is sin and all disobedience to God is equally offensive to Him. James wrote, “For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all” (2:10). This is a true principle and is especially helpful when a person is coming to terms with his or her need of a Savior. Many people, when confronted with their sin, turn to the old justification that at least their sin isn’t as grievous as another person’s. Some people reject Christ because they don’t believe they need a Savior. “After all,” they reason, “I have never murdered anyone, I’m faithful to my spouse, and I try to treat people the way I want to be treated.” James 2:10 shows that all stand condemned before God for breaking even one of His laws; this condemnation isn’t based on the number or gravity of the sins committed, but the splendor and holiness of the One against whom they have sinned. God is infinitely perfect and completely pure, therefore sin against Him requires infinite and complete condemnation.

But there is another sense in which the Bible makes a distinction between sins. While every sin is worthy of condemnation, not every sin does equal damage or carries equal consequences in a person’s life. Some sins are especially heinous and destructive because of their nature.

 What makes the sin of sexual immorality unique? What makes this such a controversial subject?

First, we must concede and agree that there truly are sexual activities that are morally wrong. This basic truth is necessary to establish in the current cultural climate because of a drastic shift in our society concerning sexual ethics. How do we know what sexual activity is improper? We must look to the Scriptures to determine what is right and wrong, good and bad, truth and lie. The Bible is clear that not all sexual activity is created equal. Sexual ethics are not determined by culture or preference. The Bible clearly defines the boundaries for sex according to God. Anything that deviates outside these biblical boundaries is sin.

Sexual immorality is unique among sins because, according to Paul, “Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the person who is sexually immoral sins against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:18). The meaning of this verse is disputed, but what is clear is that this specific sin is particularly hurtful and dishonoring to God. We should also note that sexual immorality perverts the picture of the gospel given in Ephesians 5. Finally, this category of sin is especially wicked because it is the objectification and use of another person for self-gratification.

Against One’s Own Body

In contrast with all other sins, immorality is against one’s own body. The meaning of these words is difficult to determine. Many sins, such as substance abuse, gluttony, and suicide, have detrimental effects on the body. Paul’s words do not refer to disease and/or other damage caused by sin. Instead, his words are linked to the preceding discussion of 6:12–17. There Paul established that Christians’ bodies are joined with Christ so that they become “members of Christ” (6:15) himself.

When we realize that sexual immorality is treating God's metaphor of Christ and the church (marriage) obscenely, then it isn't hard to see why Paul told the Corinthians to flee from it! Not to mention the fact that sexual immorality is a sin that entraps its victims in a more insidious way than any other sin.



How can we know what is right and wrong when it comes to sex according to God's design?

Sexual sin is prevalent in the world. It is especially prevalent in the United States, partly because we are exposed to all manner of sexual images, messages, and innuendo at every turn. Advertisers have learned that sex sells, and they have not shied away from pursuing profit in this way.

We should beware of three common ways people commit sexual immorality. The first is the use of pornographic images and videos. Jesus said, "everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). Pornography is sexual sin and must be repented of. Those who have been ensnared in this sin have often hidden it from others and developed such a dependence upon it that they need extra help to be freed from it. Sexual activity outside of marriage is another common way in which people engage in sexual immorality. God's design for sexual activity among mankind is a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman. Sex outside of marriage is a cheapening of that sacred institution and an offense to God—and it greatly harms the parties involved. Those who perpetuate sex outside of marriage are guilty of great sin against God and against the other person God created.

Finally, homosexual behavior and gender manipulation have become much more common in the United States in recent years. Those who practice these things are often held up and celebrated as examples of courage and authenticity. Yet, God says sexual activity is only permitted between a man and a woman, and there are only two genders: male and female. We may even face legal action if we refuse to validate and affirm rejections of God's plan for human gender and sexuality. The time is coming when many will have to decide between telling the truth concerning these things and repercussions from their communities and the state. We must be clear about this: No matter what culture affirms or what legislation is passed, God's Word is clear about the fact that homosexuality and the manipulation of genders is an affront to God and those who remain unrepentant will face the punishment for their sins.



Application: What has more influence over your view of sexual ethics: the world or the Bible? Why? What factors contribute to the amount of influence these have in your life?

2. Dishonoring of the Body (Romans 1:21-25)

Our culture hardly blushes when sex is paraded before us. Sadly, this is true even among those who claim the name of Christ. Many Christians have forgotten their duty to flee from sexual immorality and to shield not only their own minds and hearts from it, but also the minds and hearts of those in their care. We must refuse to let the culture educate our children about sex.

The heart of sexual immorality is self-exaltation and self-worship. Sexual immorality is the pursuit of fleshly desire with disregard to the law of God and the good of those around us. It is a fulfillment of fleshly craving that disregards God's will.

 If a person commits sexual immorality, does this mean they cannot be used by God? Explain.

Sexual immorality is a terrible sin and an affront to God and those He has made in His image. So, could a true Christian really commit such a sin? The answer is yes. Christians do commit sexual sin. We all need to be taught truth concerning sexual immorality and warned against committing it, and we need to be called to repentance when we commit it.

However, unrepentant and continual sexual sin is strong evidence that a person is not truly following Jesus. Look at what Paul said in Romans 1. Speaking of those who were outside of Christ, he said that “their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened” (v. 21). He said they did not worship God, but created things, and, for this reason, “God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves” (v. 24). He then went on to give an example of the kind of sexual immorality that people were given over to: “For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error” (vv. 26-27).

 What should a person do if they are ensnared in sexual sin? What hope is there for freedom from this bondage?

Those who are ensnared in sexual sin and part of the church should seek help from a trusted spiritual authority in their lives, such as a pastor. Others can help counsel you from the Scriptures.

If you are not a Christian but desire to be freed from sexual sin, God may use this bondage in your life to draw you to Himself and give you a desire for new life in Christ. But you will never be free from sin or the eternal consequences of sin unless you are born again. We must flee from sin and flee to Christ.

- Application: How might God use sexual sin (or any sin) for good in someone's life? How does brokenness in our lives point us to Him?

3. Fear God (Matthew 10:28-33)

When a person becomes a Christian, God grants them faith and repentance and He adopts them into His family. They are made a new creature with new affections. Yes, they still face the wiles of the devil, the draw of the world, and the influence of their old sin nature, but Christ who is in them is stronger than all those enemies. We can overcome any sin, including sexual sin, through Christ who strengthens us.

Furthermore, those who are in Christ have faith in God's Word. They believe and cherish all of God's Word and endeavor to live their lives in accordance with it. This means we will believe what God's Word says about sexuality and gender over and against what the world says about these things.

- How should we respond when faced with situations in which God's Word is being violated by those that we love?
- How is it possible to stand for God's truth but also show love to those who disagree?

We must, first and foremost, fear God and not man. Jesus said, "Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). When we live in this way, our actions are determined by what pleases God, not man. What would please man in many situations is to simply affirm another's chosen lifestyle through silence or even words that condone. But what pleases God is when we tell the truth about these things with humility and love.

We must be ready to acknowledge God before man when confronted with situations that demand a response. When we affirm sin that we know is both an affront to God and leads to condemnation of another, we deny God before man. Followers of Jesus must fear God, know their Bible, and be ready to share the gospel and the truth of God's Word with those around them who are believing lies. We must develop boldness and humility to speak clearly about sin while at the same time treating the person with tenderness.

- ❓ Application: Is there someone in your life with whom you need to speak concerning sexual immorality? How is God calling you to act?

Conclusion

Ephesians 2:3 says that we “were by nature children under wrath.” To be under the wrath of God means that a person is exposed to the just anger of God. Romans 1:18 says, “God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness.” These verses describe the fitting position of a person who remains in their sexual sin and rebellion against God.

This reality isn’t palatable to many who have bought into lies about sexuality. Those who speak against those lies are often hated. These beliefs are seen as unkind and intolerant and are outright rejected as elitist, antiquated, and dangerous. But we are called to believe and tell the truth no matter the social climate.

- ❓ What do you need to change about your views on sexuality? How will you flee sexual immorality?
- ❓ Is there a way have you unnecessarily exposed yourself and those in your care to the world’s teaching on sexuality and gender?
- ❓ How would you respond to someone who holds a different view than you regarding biblical sexuality and/or gender? Why is it crucial that we hold truth and grace together in these conversations?

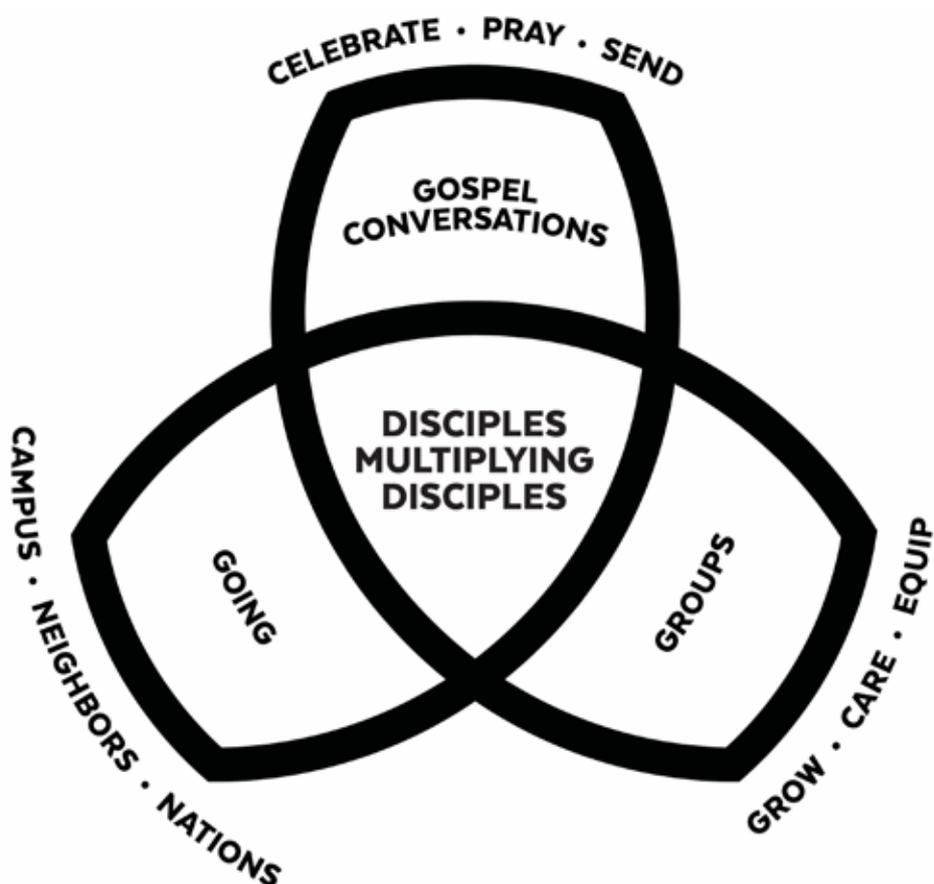
Prayer of Response

Ask the Lord to help you flee from sexual immorality and repent of sin in your life. Pray that the Lord would help you to be both bold and humble as you address this sin around you.

Additional Resources

- *Finally Free* by Heath Lambert
- *You Can Change* by Tim Chester
- *The Purity Principle* by Randy Alcorn

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Call to Action:

Start by reflecting in your own life if there is any sexual immorality. Pray for God to bring conviction and repentance to yourself and others in your life you may be struggling with sexual immorality.

Group Emphasis or Project:

Get involved in helping a ministry partner who addresses issues of sexual immorality.

Note: We have had a global worker who has worked in several areas including Washington D.C. with a ministry to girls who have been sex trafficked. Kyla would be a good resource for this.

For Next Week

Session Title

- Gospel Truth: Faith and Science Coexisting

Main Passages

- Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 19:1; Matthew 10:16; Romans 1:19-20;
Hebrews 11:3

Session Outline

1. An Established Authority (Hebrews 11:3)
2. God's Self-Revelation (Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:19-20)
3. Engaging Scientific Worldviews (Matthew 10:16)

Memorize

Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

- 1 Corinthians 6:18

Historical Context of 1 Corinthians

Purpose

Paul's purpose in writing 1 Corinthians was to motivate the Corinthian church to acknowledge the Lord's ownership of them and the implications this had in their lives. Key topics Paul addressed in this overarching theme of the ownership and authority of the Lord include Christian unity, morality, the role of women, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection.

Author

First Corinthians ascribes Paul as its author (1:1; 16:21). Biblical scholars are almost unanimous that Paul wrote the letter. He wrote it during the last year of his three-year ministry at Ephesus, probably a few weeks before Pentecost in the spring of AD 56 (15:32; 16:8; Ac 20:31).

Setting

First Corinthians is the second letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. He had written them an earlier letter, of which no extant copy exists, that included an admonition not to mix with the sexually immoral (5:9). The writing of this second letter (1 Corinthians) was prompted by oral reports from Chloe's household about factional strife within the church (1:11). Paul had also received reports about an incestuous relationship among the membership (5:1), factions that arose during observance of the Lord's Supper (11:18), and confusion over the resurrection of the dead (15:12). As a result, Paul addressed these issues in 1 Corinthians. Apparently as he was writing the letter, he received a letter from the Corinthians asking his opinion on various issues (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). Therefore, he included his replies within this letter to the Corinthian believers.

Special Features

First Corinthians is the most literary of Paul's letters. With a variety of stylistic devices—irony, sarcasm, rhetorical questions, alliteration, antithesis, personification, framing devices, hyperbole, repetition, picturesque words (with local color), double meanings, and other wordplays—Paul attempted to persuade his readers. He wanted to communicate to the Corinthians the necessity of accepting the Lord's authority over their lives.

Extended Commentary

1 Corinthians 6:18

6:18–20 Sexual immorality is unique among sins inasmuch as it is sin against the body, thus assaulting the sanctity of a believer's sacred oneness with Christ (sealed by the Holy Spirit who is in you) and the oneness of holy matrimony (cp. 7:2). The point is that the believer's body is a sacred vessel, bought at a price by the Son of God. Believers thus have no business doing anything with the Lord's body that does not glorify him.¹

Romans 1:21-25

1:21 Because of human willfulness, people's knowledge of God became clouded and their thinking became darkened. Without contact with God, the human heart loses contact with reality, misses the purpose of one's existence, ignores God, and becomes ungrateful. People are supposed to glorify God as God but instead find all sorts of created objects to worship. Part of the wrath of God is revealed in humanity's loss of intelligent thinking.

1:22 A classic example of human foolishness is found in Is 44:9–20 where human cleverness ends in stupidity.

1:23 Many people think that the history of religion developed along an evolutionary model. In this view, humanity originally held animistic beliefs and then progressed to polytheism, to tribal deities, and then to a single creator God. From there we progressed to a vague philosophical monotheism in the Enlightenment, and finally we are now embracing atheism in the age of science. But this is not true to the early history of religion. Instead of starting in polytheism, the Bible says humanity started with knowledge of the one true God and then declined into polytheism as humans were separated from God and fractured from one another. Paul warns that loss of knowledge of the true God resulted in the worship of images resembling mortal man. Even in the modern age we have seen dictators worshiped as gods, and the Bible says this sin will be repeated climactically in the end times (2Th 2:3–12; Rv 13:1–18).

1:24 Because they rejected the truths of God revealed in creation, God punished the Greco-Roman world by delivering them to the desires of their hearts. A similar scenario played out in the life of King Ahab of Israel, who continually rebelled against God (1Kg 16:29–33). As a judgment, God permitted a lying prophetic spirit to deceive Ahab to his doom (1Kg 22:22–23). The ancients were enmeshed in polytheistic idolatry, and in their devotions to their false gods they practiced all sorts of immorality.

1:25 The loss of the knowledge of God in the mind and heart leads to an exchange of the truth for a lie. Something created is served and worshiped rather than the Creator, and judgment is the result (Ps 81:12; Ac 7:42).²

Matthew 10:28-33

10:26–28 Most may not see the truth of the gospel now, but they will. And “the worst [the persecutors] can do does not match the worst God can do” (D. A. Carson).

10:29–31 If God must consent to the fall of sparrows, no disciple can suffer persecution without his consent. The God who has numbered even the hairs of your head has also numbered the days of your life. His plan for his disciples cannot be cut short by persecution.

10:32–34 Jesus’s words do not imply that his disciples should take up the sword in violent reprisal against persecutors. The sword is merely a symbol for conflict and division (Lk 12:51).³

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Author Bio

Heath Lambert (Finally Free)

Heath Lambert (PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the senior pastor at First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Florida. He is the author of *The Biblical Counseling Movement After Adams* (Crossway, 2011), coeditor of *Counseling the Hard Cases: True Stories Illustrating the Sufficiency of God's Resources in Scripture* (B&H, 2012), author of *Finally Free: Fighting for Purity with the Power of Grace* (Zondervan, 2013), coauthor of *Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible Says about Sexual Orientation and Change* (P&R, 2015), and author of *A Theology of Biblical Counseling: The Doctrinal Foundation of Counseling Ministry* (Zondervan, 2016). He is married to Lauren, and is the father of Carson, Chloe, and Connor.

You Can Change (Tim Chester)

Tim Chester (PhD, University of Wales) is a faculty member of Crosslands and a pastor with Grace Church, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire. He is an author or coauthor of over forty books, including *A Meal with Jesus*; *Reforming Joy*; and, with Michael Reeves, *Why the Reformation Still Matters*.

The Purity Principle (Randy Alcorn)

Randy Alcorn is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries, a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching biblical truth and drawing attention to the needy and how to help them. Alcorn is the author of over 40 books, including *Heaven; Money, Possessions and Eternity*; *Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments*; and *The Treasure Principle*. His novels include *Deadline*; *Dominion*; *Deception*; and *Safely Home*. Alcorn resides in Oregon with his wife, Nanci.