

Immorality How Much Do You Charge?

Dr. Jerry Stettheimer, D.Min.

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Immorality – How Much Do You Charge?

Introduction

The last couple of years I have taken up a hobby. My wife has been insisting on it for years, and so I finally paid attention. I took some woodworking classes at an Anabaptist community called Homestead Heritage in Waco, Texas. While attending a five-day session, I became aware of how the women dressed.

I live in a society (Dallas) where a lot of the women dress provocatively, (even so-called Christians). The women, in this Anabaptist community, however, were clothed from head to toe. I became aware of how much easier it was to concentrate without the constant distraction posed by scantily clad women.

Our society is constantly bombarded with all types of sexual prompts. We have become so accustomed to such prompts that we hardly recognize them; in fact we often even defend them when they are pointed out to us.

A couple of months ago I was teaching a class on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) to a junior and senior high class. Several of the teenage girls seemed to be dressed inappropriately (This was a church related-seminar!). When this topic was broached, the girls – without exception – defended the halter-tops, short shorts, and revealing attire.

Class members did not like having their dress criticized for being sexually provocative. Finally, they said, “If our dress is a problem, then it is because of what is in the man’s mind, not our dress!”

I found myself marveling at the arrogance so readily displayed regarding indecent exposure.

Is this incident typical of the nonchalant attitude with which our society defends provocative and immoral conduct, in general?

Scriptures go to great length to warn the godly about the importance of moral behavior. But our society scoffs at it. After all, what are a few wild oats? Surely, the scripture just wants to rob us of a little pleasure.

I would challenge you to examine for yourself the serious impact of what we say, how we dress, and what attitudes we portray. For the consequences of immoral behavior are not something to be taken lightly.

Upon close study and evaluation, we find that the consequences of immoral behavior can be far-reaching, both in our own lives and in the lives of our families. For convenience, we are dividing the possible consequences of immoral behavior under seven headings:

- Health
- Wealth
- Honor
- Reason

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- Inheritance
 - Heritage
 - Relationships

Of course, these are not the only consequences. In actuality, these represent only a small part of what might occur when we are involved in immoral activity.

We are warned in scripture about the consequences of pursuing an immoral life. It is our purpose to examine in detail the cost of immorality in hope that the wise person will take warning and divert his path. Perhaps knowing the anguish will cause one to take heed.

I. Health

Warnings and Symptoms

Proverbs7: 21-23 “With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.....as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life.”

The most persuasive arguments to turn others away from the primrose lane comes from those who pay the high price for short-lived pleasure. For those individuals who are serious about learning the price for immorality, all they need do is look at scripture. If that is not enough, they can easily look at the circumstances many individuals find themselves in.

Have you given thought to the type of diseases that afflict those who are sexually promiscuous? I mean besides sexually transmitted disease? You see, illicit sex results in illness. This illness begins with the breakdown of the immune system caused by guilt and anxiety. As physical breakdown starts to occur, usually within the first three months of transgression, symptoms such as susceptibility to minor illness, colds, flu, and other minor illnesses occur. Allergy problems either begin or intensify. Stomach and bowel problems, blood pressure and other physical difficulties begin. Later, more severe illness may set in. Diabetes, cancer, and a whole host of genetically rooted illness start to reveal themselves. Our bodies are now vulnerable because of the breakdown of our system as a result of anxiety and guilt. This is quite a price to pay for a little fling.

But the price is even more far-reaching.

Perhaps the two most destructive consequences of illicit sex are disease and pregnancy. Amazingly, both are the result of the strong attraction into immoral behavior. Note the tremendous spread of sexually transmitted disease. One might say, “No one wants a sexually transmitted disease.” But the reality is that the offenders willingly assume the risk of being infected and having children in these unions. The modern age, with all of its preventive medicine, is unable to halt the intense desire that leads to infection or pregnancy. The attraction and powerful, overwhelming need among the immoral is far greater than the desire for protection. Indeed, one is compelled to accept the conclusion that the immoral desire pregnancy and/or infection.

Now, I have worked with enough people to know that this argument will be met with protest of anger. No one wants to be infected with a disease. Is that true? Then why is infection so rampant? The only reasonable answer is infection is desired by ninety percent of those infected unless one declares the infected population as a whole to be composed of morons (those having an I.Q. of 50-69 and incapable of developing beyond a mental age of 8-12). More than one-half the adult population is presently infected with some form of an STD. How did that come about?

In Proverbs 5:10-16, Solomon issues three powerful warnings. Chapters 4 through 7 of Proverbs warn about disease being a consequence of immoral behavior. Immorality will consume the flesh, and even in the process, one will reject the warnings. Is that not exactly what is occurring in this nation with the present STD epidemic?

Second, the immoral person might experience illegitimate parenthood. Verse 15 reveals the desire for pregnancy and many illegitimate children.

Consider that according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), more than 65 million people in the U.S. are currently living with an incurable sexually transmitted disease. Another 15 million become infected every year.¹ These statistics reflect only the incurable diseases. Many more are infected with curable diseases. Essentially, this means that, in spite of all of the education to the contrary, people are having unprotected sex. Why? I would maintain that getting a disease is directly related to immorality and its effect on the individual. Specifically, the immoral person seems to crave infection.

This is even more true with the homosexual. By the end of this century, there were more than 807,075 reported cases of AIDS. The two groups composing the bulk of those infected were homosexual men (55 percent) and IV drug users (22 percent) (CDC).² In addition to AIDS/HIV, there are a number of other STDs. Gonorrhea and syphilis have doubled among homosexual men during the last couple of years. I say again, Solomon issued three powerful warnings.

This drive that leads to infection and pregnancy is all consuming. Even in an age when so many means are available to prohibit both pregnancy and infection, they continue to occur at an alarming rate. According to statistics put out by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) between 1976 and 1996, there were 6,240,000 pregnancies: 62 percent resulted in live births, 22 percent in abortions, and 16 percent in miscarriages. Of all pregnancies to unmarried women, 53 percent ended in abortion or miscarriage.³

But even more severe problems are associated with immorality. (You mean there can be more severe consequences than these? O yes, we have hardly begun.)

II. Wealth

Proverbs 5:8,10 “Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house...lest strangers take their fill of your wealth and your labors go to the house of an alien.”

Scripture warns that immorality has a tremendous price. This is such a serious area that Jesus included the warning in His most famous parable of the prodigal son. One of the first attitudes presented by the son was the ever-present “you owe me.” The prodigal son challenges his father with this “you owe me” attitude along with the demand: “Give me my inheritance.” The son then proceeds to make the mistake typically found with the immoral, the transference of funds into liquid capital. This mistake is rooted in the false assumption that you can buy friendship and loyalty. The prodigal’s funds quickly become exhausted, leading to his financial ruin.

Solomon suggests up front that immorality has very severe financial repercussions. The first is that one’s labor will be for others. Probably 60 to 70 percent of my clients are presently, or have in the past been, involved with another person outside their marriage. Often I will challenge the person to add up the cost of their immorality. Most of these individuals initially said, “It costs me nothing.” Yet inquiry proved this was far from true. It is my experience that on an average an affair cost between \$60,000 and \$80,000, unless a divorce occurs. Then the amount is doubled and, in some cases, quadrupled. Some may ask, “How can this be?”

It can come in many forms. If the act is with a prostitute, then there are direct costs. If it results from an affair, costs include motels, gifts, transportation expenses, and the list goes on. But there are even greater indirect costs in the form of medical costs. In some cases, the actual physical contact may result in physical disease. Frequently, however, disease is brought on by the breakdown of the immune system caused by the stress.

The vocational costs may include lost jobs, either because of sexual behavior in the work place or perhaps there is a loss of focus on the job, which may bring about termination. Perhaps, as some ministers and other religious leaders have found, loss of position and prestige can result, and even, in some circumstances, imprisonment.

Similarly, the immoral frequently experience harmful emotional consequences connected to their finances. They are far more susceptible to emotional spending. This increased wasteful spending leads to indebtedness. Solomon makes it clear that immorality costs dearly financially. This cost comes from accidents related to inattention resulting from the sexual behavior, poor decision-making, impulsive spending, the cost to maintain an affair, job loss related to the behavior, pornography with all its related industries, and so forth. One researcher estimated that more than a trillion dollars annually is lost as the result of the direct and indirect cost of immorality in the United States.

But what other costs are related to family?

Many studies of family structure focus on the tremendous financial burden that is attached to out-of-wedlock childbearing. It is so costly that the Federal government offers incentives to States to try to lower the rate of out-of-wedlock child bearing. The attempts have borne very little fruit. Nationally much higher poverty rates are seen

among single-parent and out-of-wedlock families. The price is not only paid by the mother and the children, but by society as well. Approximately half of all single-mother families receive some type of cash assistance during the year, and a higher percentage receives noncash transfers such as food stamps and Medicaid (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993).⁴ Most disconcerting are the nationwide statistics.

Among families with young children under the age of six, poverty rates are 74.1 percent for never-married mothers. The poverty rate for the divorced or separated group is 58.1 percent. Note the high price children pay for adult sin.

- In 1995, 20 percent of American children—one in five—lived in families with cash incomes below the poverty line.
- The percentage of children in poverty has stayed near or slightly above 20 percent since 1981.
- Children living with two married parents are much less likely to be poor than children living only with their mothers. In 1995, 10 percent of children in two-parent families lived in poverty, compared to 50 percent in female householder families.⁵

The mental consequences of living in poverty impact major areas of the child's life. Single parenthood affects family behavior of future generations. Children who grow up in communities with a high prevalence of single-mother families find single parenthood more acceptable and are more likely to become single parents themselves than children who grow up in communities where single parenthood is less common.⁶

To get an idea of the magnitude of the effects of single parenthood, consider the following statistics. During the 1980s, the high school dropout rate was approximately 18 percent for all children in the U.S., 13 percent for children in two-parent families, and 26 percent for children in single-mother families. The statistics show that living with a single parent increases the risk of dropping out of school by a factor of two, a nontrivial effect. In general, the effects are more negative for behavior-related outcomes, such as "acting out," skipping school, or dropping out of high school.⁷

The effects of single motherhood are consistent across different race and ethnic groups and across different social classes. They are similar for boys and girls and for children who live apart from a parent in early childhood, as well as for those who live apart in late childhood. In most instances, remarriage does not diminish the negative consequences associated with single parenthood; in fact, remarriage may worsen the problem. Children who live with a mother and stepfather or a mother and her partner do just as poorly in school and are just as likely to become teen mothers or spend time in jail as children who live with a single mother alone.⁸

Spiritual consequences are also significant. But what is spiritual wealth? Spiritual wealth may be defined as those gifts that the Lord bestows for the common good. Some receive wisdom; others, financial insight; or others, perhaps special understanding of the demon world. Perhaps it may be the gift of healing. This refers to the special ability that some have to heal others. It is not referring to the hucksters among us who like to portray themselves as healers. Gifts are given so that we and others may grow and mature as godly people. Immorality destroys these god-given gifts. The immoral forfeit their god-given gifts by their behavior and estrange

themselves from the living God, impoverishing themselves in the process. Thus, when scripture refers to “leanness of spirit,” it refers to the loss of these special gifts.

One biblical example comes from the life of King David. Near the age of fifty, David involved himself in an illicit affair with Bathsheba. He eventually had to murder her husband. Because of the affair, David loses everything—children, position, and even his throne.

III. Honor

Proverbs 5:8-9 “Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house; lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless.”

Stern warning is given about the ultimate disgrace that comes to the immoral person. Honor is one of those attributes that is slowly acquired and quickly lost. Today unfaithful and disloyal men support the rampant divorce rate. The most glaring example from the 1990s is, of course, President Clinton.

Perhaps we need a child’s perception of divorce and remarriage. When children see the biological parents going to bed together, they think nothing of it. It is normal, and for that matter, expected. One way to distress a child is for a parent to sleep on the couch one night. The child wants to know why.

However, when a child sees a biological parent go to bed with someone else, his or her spirits scream for reproof. Attempts to justify or defend one’s behavior is for naught. The child senses unfaithfulness and responds by various types of behavior that says this is wrong. As children get older, they experience a modification in their thinking. Now, because they have been told that it is acceptable numerous times, they accept the idea, both for the parent and their own future sexual relationships.

This “unfaithfulness” sets the stage for a variety of problems with the child. I suspect bed wetting in children, when it is not from physical cause, may well be rooted in this adult behavior.

Another issue for children has to do with loyalty. How can they accept unfaithfulness and remain loyal to both parents? The dilemma goes beyond reason. Confusion sets in, and any attempt to address the matter brings instant justification by the parent. There is no solution, just consequences.

I suspect this situation is what Jesus may have been addressing when He said it was adultery to remarry. We come along with all sorts of interpretations, which we justify on the basis of a spouse’s unfaithfulness. I think it is just as Jesus says: God allows it; however, the consequences remain. Perhaps we need to broaden our definition of adultery to accommodate a child’s understanding.

So what does a parent do? What does one say to the child, and how does one say it? First, the parent has to “get right” with the child. One may ask, Why? Because the parent’s behavior results in the child’s acceptance of the same standard for their own behavior. This is the root-reason why divorce goes from one generation to the next.

The child is indoctrinated into believing that it is acceptable. However, a young child's spirit reveals the truth.

Perhaps the clearest example of dishonor that comes to the immoral comes from observing the immorality of our presidents.

The immortality of John Kennedy and Bill Clinton are legendary. As the years have gone by, the public has become increasingly aware of Kennedy's adultery in the White House with the mention of well-known women, such as Marilyn Monroe, Jayne Mansfield, and strippers Blaze Starr and Tempest Storm.

It is one of the great ironies of history that Kennedy's adulteries sealed his death. For, on that fateful day in Dallas, Kennedy was wearing a back brace necessitated by his strenuous sexual activity. The back brace prevented him from falling forward when struck by the first bullet, holding him upright for the second shot to the head.

Clinton's immorality is legendary as well. Clinton wanted to be remembered as a great president. However, his immorality overshadows his accomplishments. Immorality is one sin that is remembered by future generations. Its dishonor is not wiped away. Its only answer is public remorse and repentance.

In contrast, George Washington believed that success depended on being able to look in a mirror and see a man of honor, and this played a significant role in the American Revolution.

One could say that the British in large part lost the Revolutionary War because of immorality on the part of their military commanders. One American general addressing the behavior of General Sir William Howe, commander of the main British army, said: "Howe shut his eyes, fought his battles, drank his bottle, had his little whore..." Because Howe was so caught up with his immoral lifestyle, he was unable to adequately assess the battle situation leading to major defeats.

This same situation existed with John Montagu. Montagu, First Lord of the Admiralty, who was in charge of the naval war, was deeply infatuated with his lover, Martha Ray. James Hackman, another of her lovers, wanted to elope with her. When she refused, Hackman shot her in the face. When Montagu was informed of her death at the beginning of the campaign at Yorktown, he went to bed and refused to be comforted. Lacking leadership, Washington defeated Montagu's army at Yorktown.¹⁰

Marvin Olasky describes the environment prevalent among the British high command, where neither the ground nor the naval war was conducted by moral leaders:

Montagu was a key member of a social club known as the Mad Monks of Medmenham. Medmenham was a semi-ruined abbey that a leading British politician, Sir Francis Dashwood, had purchased in the early 1750s and refurbished in pornographic splendor. Montagu loved Medmenham's 'garden of lust,' which featured shrubbery pruned to resemble a woman's private parts. He loved the stained glass windows that contained indecent pictures of the Twelve Apostles, the chapel ceiling with a huge pornographic fresco, the library said to contain the

country's largest collection of pornographic books, and the London prostitutes who came to the abbey and dressed as nuns. ¹¹

One key battle after another fell to Washington, who just would not quit. Washington, known for his perseverance and integrity, was a role model for his officers. On the one hand, we have Washington's passion for victory and integrity. On the other side, the British passion was for immorality.

But we do not have to look to politics and government to see examples (and casualties) of the battle for honor.

Abortion, in my estimation, is one form of dishonor visited upon the immoral person. It is not just the woman who experiences feelings of shame. After a quarter of a century counseling with every conceivable type of difficulty, I can say that abortion heads the list of offenses that people do not want to talk about. I have had couples volunteer information about spouse swapping, incest, even bestiality, and yes, in one case murder. Yet, abortion seems to be a taboo issue.

In 35 years of counseling, half of which were in a state mental institution (as a therapist, not as my wife suspects, a patient), I have never had a person spontaneously admit to having an abortion. The self-shame attached to this act is severe. The reason of omission cannot be the presence of the therapist. Clients' admit to everything else. Nor is the silence limited to the women who get abortions. Doctors, nurses, and others working in this atmosphere of death are very reluctant to admit this as a livelihood.

IV. Reason

Proverbs 6:32 "He who commits immorality has no sense; he who does it destroys himself."

What does it mean to have no sense? Prov. 6:32, 7:7, 9:16. It refers to a state of confusion existing within the person. Confusion combined with frustration leads to blindness (seeing but not seeing) and double mindedness. This confusion leads to a multitude of "accidents." In reality, many accidents are the result of defective reasoning rooted in immorality.

Obedience or lack of it affects practically everything we do. Failure in this area is most evident in the "accident" rate of any society. Traffic accidents are a prime example. Notice how the majority of all accidents result from the failure to obey a rule, law, ordinance, or known truth. The majority of traffic accidents, which account for more than 45,000 deaths per year, are preventable. Simply obeying the rules results in an increased life span.

Proverbs 7:12 warns that the immoral person will testify to others his hatred of discipline, and will serve as a witness to others of the ruin that comes from disdain of discipline. This is no small problem, for without discipline, poor decision-making, accidents, rebellion, and a host of other problems affect the person. When we refuse to place ourselves under lawful authority and when we challenge every rule, law, or custom, hostility and transgression hang on us like a deep fog.

Violations of our body—as the result of improper diet, inadequate exercise, and the use of known harmful substances—account for a majority of the admissions to medical and psychiatric facilities. Most violations are of known rules, laws, ordinances, and instructions.

More than 430,000 people in the United States die each year from smoking. Another 14,000 individuals die from drug use, and hundreds of thousands die from food-related abuses.¹² These deaths are not the result of a lack of information, for our society is flooded with a constant barrage of information, but most of the information goes unheeded.

Hearing refers to a continual intensive action that occurs. Often, the hearing should produce action or behavior. Immorality, however, disrupts one's ability to hear clearly. One hears the sound, but makes little sense of what is spoken. One's own thoughts intrude to the point that one is unable to competently respond to the words spoken by others. This obsessive thinking is often brought about because of inappropriate moral behavior or thoughts.

This reminds me of something that I have seen numerous times. Police officers sometimes have to block a lane of traffic. No sooner have they done so than numerous people try to go around the road block, argue with the officer about why they should be allowed to continue, and demand their rights since they pay taxes. People in rebellion neither listen nor pay attention to laws or authority, and they frequently feel they have a special dispensation to ignore the rules. This behavior is a direct result of the consequences of disobedience or immorality. Thinking is twisted, and what is heard is what one wants to hear. The results can be disastrous.

When people hate discipline, they are unable to follow a logical course of action. Like gravity, every thought that is stimulated is affected by and strained through rebellion. The problem with the rebellious person's thinking is that there is no understanding or discernment of underlying motives or conditions. Immorality inhibits one's ability to think clearly. In fact, Solomon says: "A fool takes no pleasure in understanding but only in expressing his opinion." (Proverbs 18:2).

Moreover, Solomon gives a couple of other traits, which are easily observed among the immoral. Solomon says that the immoral person is unstable and, in this state, does not recognize his or her own instability. One type of mental illness seems to exemplify this trait, and that is bipolar disease. That is not to say that everyone who is bipolar is immoral. However, I have found those suffering from the manic and depressive states of bipolar mental illness often have a long history of immorality. I know it is popular to say that this disease is created by chemical imbalance, but I wonder which came first—the immorality or the chemical imbalance.

Unfortunately, it is not "politically correct" to include moral questions in our investigations into mental and emotional illness. Jesus was not under such restraint. I find it intriguing that in interviewing people whom he heals Jesus focuses on the problems, which caused their present illness. Often He points to the characterological circumstances, which need correction.

On one occasion, Jesus healed an invalid who had suffered some 38 years. The man was filled with excuses for his situation. Jesus put it all aside and told him to get up and walk. The revealing part of this situation came somewhat later when Jesus saw

the man and told him that his prior illness was the result of sin and warned him that if he returned to this state, things will be much worse for him. Immorality brings painful physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual consequences. It brings conflict as well.

Proverbs 18:6. "A fool brings strife." Immorality is always considered foolish behavior in scripture. Any law enforcement person who has worked on the streets will attest to the conflict that surrounds prostitution. Invariably high crime areas of any city are deeply infiltrated by all levels of sexual perversity and prostitution. It is one of the ironies of life that immoral women tend to produce intense competition and conflict between their suitors. Conflict is also seen on a regular basis in marriages where premarital sex was present. Conflict is habitually seen in out-of-wedlock relationships.

Another phenomena that occurs with immorality is the tendency not to want to be at home. Regardless of the age group, this behavior is repeated. Take the teen that is involved sexually. One of the first behaviors exhibited is absence from home, running away, or conflict, which distances the individual from other family members. After leaving home, the individual seeks the company of others who exhibit similar moral corruptness.

What parent of a wayward teenager has not experienced first-hand the child's provocation in arguments, which then result in aberrant behavior? Many have seen these hysterical temper tantrums and not recognized them for what they were, attempts to draw away from the family to join friends in sinful behavior.

After they are introduced to immorality, teenagers find themselves uncomfortable with their parents and moral friends. They pull away by finding fault, criticizing and starting arguments so they can get away. It is easy to know when the immoral behavior stops; the child returns to the family.

Even as I sit here writing, I see in my mind's eye several families who have spouses that never seemed to be at home. Working with these families, it became apparent that the spouse was engaged in extramarital affairs.

These people find it difficult to be at home with family members. Part is of course their guilt, but more often it is just discomfort at being around moral people. Frequently, the unfaithful spouses will encourage their mates to engage in risky behavior or to dress in sexually alluring clothes, or will seduce them into immoral relationships with others.

The need to flee from home or seduce the spouse also to engage in inappropriate or immoral behavior is certainly among the results when reason is perverted.

Paul also addresses the spiritual problems resulting from immoral behavior. One of the results found in Romans 1:21 is "their senseless minds were darkened." It is this phrase that I find intriguing. Paul says two things about their spiritual state. They are senseless, a notion Solomon affirms, and then Paul speaks of the darkening process.

What is this darkening process? Normally, when we speak of light and darkness, it implies something about the eyes. Have you ever looked closely at the eyes of an immoral person? Let me tell you what I see.

The immoral person's eyes are constantly looking for some new object to lust after. The object is scanned for dress, which indicates tendencies toward immorality and rebellion, and then an open invitation is transmitted to the other person for sex through the eyes.

This is why Solomon in Proverbs 4:25 says: "Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you." Again he warns in Proverbs 6:25 "... do not let her capture you with her eyelashes." The eyes play the most important role in the initial invitation. It is the eyes that reveal the sad state of the soul. Literally, the eyes are darkened. There is no other way to describe this phenomenon. The eyes no longer "sparkle"; they lose their ability to reflect light.

Thus, immorality leads to emotional and erratic behavior, which perverts one's sense of reason and often disrupts the life of the family. Thus, the sins are visited not only on the offender.

V. Heritage

Proverbs 5:15-17. "Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you."

The innocent are those who pay the highest price for immorality. Solomon warns that the results of immorality are an increase in illegitimate children. At one time, illegitimacy was considered a disgrace, which followed the person throughout their life. Now it has become almost a badge of honor. Women in larger and larger numbers seek children without marriage, without husbands.

I have seen numerous young women of marital age in the past few years. It is astounding how strongly they set their face against marriage. U.S. population studies track the rise in both sexual activity and pregnancy among nonmarried women. "Trends in non-marital pregnancy rates reflect, in part, trends in sexual activity among unmarried women. Among unmarried adult women of childbearing age, levels of sexual activity remained stable or even increased slightly between 1988 and 1995. The proportion of unmarried women in their twenties who were sexually active in the previous year increased slightly, from 72.6 to 76.8 percent)." ¹³

Looking at this trend over a 30-year period, we can see the huge increase in births to unmarried women. As seen in the chart below, the percentage of these births rose from 10 percent in 1969 to 33 percent in 1999. In 1960, births to unmarried women accounted for only 5 percent of total births.

The following chart reflects the number and percentage of births to unmarried women in the United States:

Table 1: Percentage of Births to Unmarried Women in the United States

Year	Births to Unmarried	%of all births
1999	1,304,594	33.0 Percent
1998	1,293,567	32.8
1996	1,260,306	32.4
1995	1,253,976	32.2
1990	1,165,384	28.0
1985	828,174	18.4
1980	665,747	18.4
1975	447,900	14.3
1970	398,700	10.7
1969	360,800	10.0

(Source: Report to the U.S. Congress on Out of Wedlock childbearing, September, 1995 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Hyattsville, Maryland, September 1995 DHHS Publication No. (PH#) 95-1257.)¹⁴

This trend is causing considerable concern in the government, which is the topic of the following article: “The Retreat from Marriage and the Rise in Nonmarital Fertility,” by Daniel Lichter. ¹⁵ He states in his introduction:

The new "individualism" in America, the quest for personal fulfillment, and the decline in moral or religious values have gone hand-in-hand with declining marriage rates. Marriage is often seen as restricting personal freedom and growth, as well as potentially handicapping work careers (e.g., tied migration). According to this argument, marriage and traditional family life are increasingly incompatible with the demands of a modern industrial economy. The overwhelming evidence is that declines in marriage have occurred for virtually every segment of American society—the young and the old; employed and unemployed; affluent and poor; highly educated and less educated; urban and rural residents; African American, White, and Hispanic. Current marriage trends are ubiquitous and have affected virtually all social, economic, and demographic groups.

Waite another researcher in the field says; “The evidence is overwhelming: marriage is beneficial to individuals and society, on balance (Waite 1995). Married people have better emotional and physical health. They live longer. The children raised by a loving married couple have well-documented advantages, both emotionally and economically, over children living in single-parent families.” ¹⁶

A key change in marital status patterns has been the large increase in cohabitation or “living together” among unmarried couples). In the years 1980–84, 29 percent of out-of-wedlock births were to cohabiting couples. By 1990–94, this proportion increased to 39 percent, according to data from NCHS’ National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG) and the National Survey of Families and Households. Most of the increase in births to unmarried women since the early 1980s was in births to unmarried cohabiting women.¹⁷

It seems that, as a society, we have lost a sense of propriety about cohabiting and its long-term effects. Sara McLanahan, a long-time researcher in this field attempts to awaken the public when she says: “To get an idea of the magnitude of the effects of single motherhood, consider the following: During the 1980s, the high school dropout rate was approximately 18 percent for all children in the U.S., 13 percent for children in two-parent families, and 26 percent for children in single-mother families. The statistics show that living with a single parent increases the risk of dropping out of school by a factor of two, a nontrivial effect.”¹⁸

Yes, these consequences continue for the children. As the child gets older, the problems escalate. The consequences are even more negative when they are measured in adolescence and young adulthood. The age difference is probably due to the fact that behavioral problems have consequences that are more serious in young adulthood than in childhood. For example, acting out in elementary school may lead to problems in the classroom, whereas acting out in adolescence may result in dropping out of school or getting pregnant.

The effects of single motherhood are consistent across different race and ethnic groups and across different social classes. The effects are similar for boys and girls and for children who live apart from a parent in early childhood as well as in late childhood.

In most instances, remarriage does not diminish the negative consequences associated with single parenthood, and in some cases, it exacerbates problems. Children who live with a mother and stepfather or a mother and her partner do just as poorly in school and are just as likely to become teen mothers or spend time in jail as children who live with a single mother alone.¹⁹

Deuteronomy 28:37 sets out in stark reality the affects of disobedience on one’s heritage. Generational sins are passed from one generation to the next. In this passage, one of the chief generational “gifts” passed on is one of “captivity.” If you replace this word with another word, which spells out a specific type of captivity the result is astounding. By replacing the word “captivity” with “addiction”, one can see an immediate parallel to our society. Look how this problem rages among the children of the immoral. Immorality by one’s parents results in the inheritance of addiction.

What problems will the child have because of the parent’s choices? An illegitimate child has only one parent. This gives the child a biased world view from the beginning. This is particularly troublesome in the area of authority. Moreover, illegitimate children feel cheated. They feel they miss what other children have. The problems are worsened by the taunts of other children about their situation. The illegitimate child feels a life-long sense of emptiness, which follows them to the grave. In part, this accounts for the ever-present sense of insecurity they struggle with.

The illegitimate child is doomed to dysfunctional family relationships, both in the nuclear family and in extended family relationships. This follows them into their own marriage since their view of marriage and family life is strongly colored by their experiences.

The chief sorrow for the illegitimate child lies in the family dysfunction that results. We have looked at the effects upon the children from a sociological perspective, including the increase of teen pregnancy and dropping out of school, and the inability to develop a successful marriage for themselves later in life. Now, let's look at it from a Biblical perspective.

What can be gleaned from God's word? We can start with the Master Himself. Jesus was perceived by his enemies as being illegitimate. (John 8:41) This accounts for much hostility directed toward Him and for why his enemies found it impossible to accept Him. It seems that the world is always prepared to offer snide, sarcastic, venomous words to denigrate the child in these circumstances. Most of us at one time or another have seen, heard, witnessed, or participated in this behavior. The most intense reminders come from within the family in the form of familial rejection.

Two major incidents in Jesus' life record reflect the family hostility. Mark 3:19ff records the first incident. Here Jesus, near the beginning of His ministry, has experienced wide success as a result of His healing multitudes of the sick. Jesus selects twelve disciples to help in His future ministry and then goes home. The crowds give Him no peace, constantly bringing the lame, blind, and sick for His attention. His family hears of it and comes to take Him away forcibly saying, "He is crazy." At the same time, His chief enemies, the scribes, sling such venomous slurs upon Him that he warns them they are on the brink of committing a sin with eternal consequences.

Jesus deals with his family hostility by separating Himself from them and declaring new family members from those who believe in Him. This, however, is not the end of the matter. A year before His death—in fact on October 6, 29 A.D., a Thursday—Jesus is again confronted by His brothers. They taunt Him and encourage him to return to Judea and Jerusalem, knowing that there was a price on His head and that he would be arrested and killed.

Obstacles were thrown even at Christ because of the circumstances related to his birth. In Christ's case, these difficulties were overcome. But do children in these circumstances today have the same extraordinary gifts?

VI. Inheritance

Deuteronomy 28:41 "You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity [addiction]."

The innocent are those who pay the highest price for immorality. Rarely does one give forethought to the price that one's children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren will pay for immoral thoughts and actions. We have included just a few morsels to stimulate one's conscience about the future results of today's indiscretions.

According to a CDC Fact Sheet issued in May 2001, more than 35,600 cases of syphilis were reported by health officials in 1999, including 6,650 cases of primary and secondary syphilis and 556 cases of congenital syphilis in newborns. It is shocking to see more than 500 cases of immorality, directly affecting the lives of totally innocent babies.²⁰

It is likely that an untreated pregnant woman with active syphilis will pass the infection to her unborn child. About 25 percent of these pregnancies result in stillbirth or neonatal death. Between 40 to 70 percent of such pregnancies will yield a syphilis-infected infant.

Some infants with congenital syphilis may have symptoms at birth, but most develop symptoms between two weeks and three months later. These symptoms may include skin sores, rashes, fever, weakened or hoarse crying sounds, swollen liver and spleen, yellowish skin (jaundice), anemia, and various deformities. Care must be taken in handling an infant with congenital syphilis because the moist sores are infectious.

Rarely, the symptoms of syphilis go undetected in infants. As infected infants become older children and teenagers, they may develop the symptoms of late-stage syphilis, including damage to their bones, teeth, eyes, ears, and brain.

How many infants are affected by immorality on the part of the parent annually? According to the CDC, 800,000 pregnant women have bacterial vaginosis and herpes simplex; 200,000 have chlamydia; 80,000 have trichomoniasis; 40,000 have gonorrhea and Hepatitis B; and 8,000 have HIV and syphilis.²¹

An estimated 440,000 children, who lost their mother or both parents to AIDS, were alive and under the age of 15 at the end of 1997.²²

Whether it is because of disease, loss of a parent, or other effects we will discuss, these children all seem to be dramatically affected by the immorality of their parents. Sara McLanahan, a researcher in the area of single-parent families, makes a statement that I feel focuses on the issue at hand. She states:

We reject the claim that children raised by only one parent do just as well as children raised by both parents. We have been studying this question fourteen years, and in our opinion the evidence is quite clear: Children who grow up in a household with only one biological parent are worse off, on average that children who grow up in a household with both of their biological parents, regardless of the parents' race, educational background, regardless of whether the parents are married when the child is born, and regardless of whether the resident parent remarries.²³

Some may think that remarriage is a good alternative, but the statistics do not bear this out. In a national survey looking at achievement and health problems of stepfamilies, it was discovered that children in stepfamilies show an elevated risk of maladjustment and school failure.²⁴ In fact, the incidence of emotional or behavior problems for children aged 3-17 in a home with their biological parents was only 8.3 percent; however, the incidence of these problems was 19.1 percent in a single-parent mother family and 23.6 percent in a mother-stepfather family structure.²⁵

Evidence from longitudinal research indicates that, on the average, children of divorced parents do worse than children from intact families, even prior to their parents' divorce. For example, one widely cited study found that half of the difference in achievement test scores between boys from intact and non-intact families was due to pre-divorce differences.²⁶ However, follow-up studies of these same children have since shown that divorce had long-term negative consequences, in addition to the effects of any pre-divorce differences in the child's well being.²⁷

Moreover, these mental consequences of immorality in the children can be seen in that 87 percent of children from two-parent families graduate from high school, while only 68 percent of students from families with one biological parent graduate.²⁸

As if these problems were not enough, other difficulties for the children of divorce occur. In fact, the child from a broken home inherits the consequences of that breakup, beginning immediately and continuing until their death.

Children suffer great emotional problems from the separation and divorce of their parents. The father-child relationship is weakened and in many cases destroyed altogether. When separation and divorce occur, The children decide that parents are not trustworthy, and they usually decide to make choices for themselves. Frequently, this results in poor decisions about peer relationships, drugs, and friends, as well as the rejection of authority. All of this sustains a cycle of divorce, remarriage, and divorce.

At the same time, the mother is forced into a dual role of provider and parent. The stress becomes tremendous. There is no energy to discipline properly. The mother either over disciplines or under disciplines; neither one is good for the child.

Moreover, the mother does not have the energy to provide the loving warmth that was available before the divorce. Obsessed with her own needs, she seeks comfort for herself, further alienating her children. A large number of these women turn to cohabitation out of insecurity and fear of commitment. This further undermines family morals.

The stepfather role, if remarriage is chosen, is doomed to failure almost from the beginning. The child typically will reject efforts for a stepparent to discipline. Children are torn between loyalties even if they like the stepparent. They hope in their hearts the parents will get back together, and this is not possible with the remarriage. Issues with authority are magnified even more when cohabitating relationships exist.

Single parenthood is associated with higher poverty rates and higher rates of welfare receipt. It also is associated with higher rates of depression, unhappiness, low self-esteem, and poor health. (McLanahan and Booth 1989; Seltzer 1994; Brown and Eisenberg 1995).

Finally, single parenthood affects the family formation behavior of future generations. Children who grow up in communities with a high prevalence of single-parent families find single parenthood more acceptable and are somewhat more likely to become single parents themselves than children who grow up in communities where single parenthood is less common.²⁹ The intergenerational effect

persists even after adjusting for other community variables, such as dropout rates, unemployment rates, and crime. ³⁰

After looking at this information, we more easily understand why the Lord says what He does about divorce. Two passages of scripture give us insight. Malachi 2:13-16 states: "And this you do as well: You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor at your hand. You ask, "Why does he not?" Because the Lord was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit is his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth. For I hate divorce, says the Lord, the God of Israel, and covering one's garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless."

The inclusion of this passage in a paper on morality is relevant because it reveals that divorce is a morality problem. I know of no other passage that reveals the consequences so strongly. Bear with me as we together understand what the Lord is revealing here.

First, take note in the opening sentence: the problem or more specifically, the consequence upsetting these people is that God is rejecting their offerings. No doubt, these offerings were given at great sacrifice by very poor people who wanted the Lord's acceptance. They wanted it so desperately and experienced rejection so deeply that they were weeping and crying, begging to know what was happening. By whatever means the Lord employed, they knew, God was rejecting their offerings, and they wanted to correct the situation.

Why Lord? Why? Then the Living God spelled it out for them in the most simple of language. "I witnessed your marriage, I gave you this person as a blessing, and you have cursed my blessing. . . I want Godly offspring, and you make that near impossible with divorce." In the next sentence, the Lord explains why in the most vivid of language.

One should understand at this point something about the Hebrew language. It is one of the most ancient of languages. It is a highly picturesque language. Here the Lord uses a word, which He wants us, the reader, to see in our mind's eye. The Hebrew word "Chamac" is a very intense word. Divorce, according to its usage, is literally beating a person to death. Have you ever seen such a thing? I remember the first time I did; let me share it with you.

The first time is always the most vivid. No matter how many times you see it later on, the first time leaves an unforgettable impression. As time goes by, one is deadened to the scene seeing it time and again, but the first time...

It was early in my work as a Dallas Police officer. It was a very cold March evening when my partner and I received a call to the 2600 block of Hatcher, a high crime area in the southern part of Dallas. The cold was bone-chilling, and it was nearly time to get off. "346, you have a family disturbance at 2622 Hatcher, Apartment B. The call comes from a neighbor who says a women has been crying and screaming for nearly thirty minutes."

“346 received and in route.” It took several minutes to get to the location. The apartment was located up a narrow flight of stairs. It was dark, and it was cold.

Taking my heavy flashlight, I knocked, and then beat on the unanswered door. We could hear noise coming from inside the apartment. Finally, a young male opened the door slightly and wanted to know what we wanted. He had on a pair of pants and no shirt, and was sweating profusely. Perspiration was running off of him in buckets with the temperature near 20 degrees. He had a towel in his hand and continually dried himself.

“Sir, we had a call about a disturbance. Can we come in?” He quickly replied that he was by himself, and there was no need for the police. “Sir, I am sure that is true, but it is cold out here. Can we come in?”

“I told you my wife is not here; she is at work.”

There was no sound coming from the apartment except for a television turned low. Looking down, I saw a small garbage pail by the door half-full of bloody broken glass. I noticed he had blood and cuts on his hand.

“What happened, I asked?”

He quickly replied, “I was just cleaning up. Here step inside.”

As we stepped inside, I noticed that the apartment was dark, but very clean. The cleanness was refreshing. “Can I speak to your wife?” I asked again.

“She is not here.”

“May I look and then we will be gone.”

“Ok,” he said.

While my partner continued to talk to the suspect, I started through the apartment. It was dark. It was clean. In the first bedroom, a couple of children were asleep. The room was neat. In the back bedroom, obviously the master bedroom, the bed was still made and a woman’s purse was on the bed, which was strange. A woman rarely leaves home without her purse. I started back and flashed my light in the bathroom. There was blood all over the sink. I returned to the front of the apartment, went into the kitchen, and turned on the light. The sight was appalling.

Blood was everywhere, in long streaks down the walls on the refrigerator, the cabinets, everywhere. An ironing board stood in the kitchen with blood on it, and beside it, a garbage can was half-filled with more bloody glass and an old iron, also covered with blood and hair. Bloody footsteps led to the back door and the staircase rails, and the steps were covered in streaks of blood. Returning to the living room and turning on the light, one could see wads of blood and hair on the floor.

That is the thought that comes to mind when I read the scripture. Divorce is literally beating the person to death with blood splattering all over your clothes in the process. It is the children who suffer the most from this type of immorality. Is that not the conclusion you reach, as we have looked at the problems that the children experience who come from single-parent families?

VII. Relationships

Proverbs 5:18-19 “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely hind, a graceful doe. Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, be infatuated always with her love.”

Sex is often sought after for its short-term effects. This may blind one to its long-term treasures. Sex is the cohesive material that holds a relationship together. It is not just an act or series of acts. Sex is an investment in the future—physically, emotionally, and mentally. Sex is an investment in each other's heritage with an expectation of future return and increase compounded by the measure given.

One cannot have premarital relations, be unfaithful in marriage, or have multiple marriages without paying a heavy price. This is one of the central problems that occur in blended families; they just do not mix.

We often hear contradictory information as to why a person should wait for marriage to engage in the sexual relationship. I wonder if we really know why. Other than morally, are there reasons?

The answer, I believe, lies in how God created woman. Built into her make up are the seeds for her being the fulfillment for her husband. During the first year of marriage, a bonding process occurs. It is a slow process to be sure, but if done properly, no other woman after that first year of marriage will be able to supplant the wife. This bonding process creates a union that emotionally, physically, spiritually, and intellectually affects the couple. It is not founded on how they feel toward each other at the time of marriage. This process cannot begin outside the bonds of marriage, for there is no security for the man or the woman outside this bond. Security is the glue that holds the relationship together.

The man makes himself very vulnerable to the woman he has sex with. Her knowledge of him has the potential to destroy him, if misused. By engaging in multiple relationships, the man hopes to weaken his fear and dilute the strength of the woman's power over him. The woman, on the other hand, must have security if she is to allow this kind of penetration into her being.

I suspect many at this point would say: “Nonsense. Sexual relations prior to marriage, or even the number of sex partners does not affect the marriage. Comparisons are used to show how different relationships make a better lover.”

However, I would challenge you to think: If there is nothing to compare the sex act with other than one's experience with one's mate, then there are no competing or conflicting difficulties introduced into the relationship.

If that experience is one of joy, then there is no desire for someone else.

Moreover, I would submit that what occurs during that first year of marriage with two people who are cooperating with God's laws is indeed a one-of-a kind-experience, which cannot be repeated. The fitting process only happens once in our lifetime, and the fit can only be for those two people.

Let us look at what is supposed to happen sexually during the first year of marriage, and how it is affected by multiple sex partners. Perhaps this will give us further insight into the uniqueness of one's mate.

The importance of the first year for the marriage is emphasized by God when He mandates that during the first year, the man is exempt from everything—to allow him to tend to the marital relationship.

What does the couple discover during that first year? First, although the idea is appealing, the chief purpose of sex is not to have children. Sex meets man's need for companionship, and is a reminder of those days in the garden when man communed with the Lord about the deeper things of life. One needs only to recall the intense satisfaction of discovery of spiritual truths to acknowledge the truth of this.

Moreover, during the first year of marriage, a fit is made. A multiple of factors are involved—size, shape, depth, smell, and our brain cells commit to memory every little detail. Our spirits bond to that person in a manner that can never be duplicated. Sure, you can find the cheap variety pack that fits everyone, but it is just not the same.

With what can we compare the fitting process that takes place in the marriage relationship? Perhaps to the embryo that grows in the mother's womb for nine months—the immune system accepts the fetus and it grows to fit the mother. Or the fitting process might also be compared to buying a pair of shoes. As they are worn, they are broken in to fit that particular foot. A physical fitting occurs sexually in much this same way.

Sure two people can have sex with many other people; they do it all the time, but it is not the same. Have you ever noticed the shape of women's stockings when they come out of those little eggs? What happens when she puts them on? They now fit her. What if someone else puts her hose on? They do not fit properly. Sure, a woman can have sex with more than one man, but the fit is now generic, not unique.

So, what occurs when there are a number of partners? A very poor fit. You can use pliers to loosen a bolt or the proper size wrench made to fit it. The pliers do the job, but the risk of damage is much greater. One can put a 100-watt bulb in a 40-watt socket, but the risk of fire is much greater. One may put a 100-watt bulb in a 300-watt socket, but the output is much dimmer. Notice in I Samuel, David met several wise women of reputation before marriage. These women were smart, intelligent, and wise until they married David; then they disappear from the pages of history. One among many means the woman has far less influence in the life of the husband. There is limited ability for fitting when prior relationships have occurred.

What if problems develop? Perhaps a mismatch occurs. Maybe a fit does not happen. The situation can be corrected, even late in marriage, as long as no one else has been brought into the relationship.

But I assure you that if two people spend that first year putting their mate first—sacrificing, discovering, and providing, there will not be another person who can seriously challenge that marriage.

Who would you suppose is the best person to instruct in sexual matters if not the newly married couple?? Some men and a few women would suggest a prostitute might be a good candidate, someone well experienced in the sexual appetite and how it is to be satisfied. There was a program filmed a few months ago where a mother concerned about her son's future, took him to a house of prostitution when he was fifteen to learn about sex. Is this the best solution? Or perhaps someone trained like the courtesans of Oriental background. They possess superior knowledge, or do they?

I would submit that the most naive virgin possesses more pure knowledge of such things than any of these. As startling as it may seem, those who misuse and abuse sex have no real knowledge of it.

Since sex was created by the Lord and not by Satan, true understanding must flow from the source. Certain things are known about God and may be trusted. One of the most trustworthy is that God does not reveal his truths to the evil one, nor in the hands of the evil one will one discover the paths of life. One must seek knowledge of sex from its Creator, not its perverter. God is the source of all knowledge. I do not think for a moment that He would trust such knowledge to such wickedness. The Lord God gives important knowledge to the person in marriage who needs and desires such wisdom.

As a counselor, I have seen many newly married people unable to understand why they feel incompatible. After all, they say they lived together two years before they got married, just to see if they would be compatible.

It seems marriage wipes out the prior adjustment. The nature of the marriage relationship begins with a covenant, which brings certain pledges, privileges, and responsibilities. These pledges provide the foundation for intimacy. One finds intimacy difficult in an atmosphere of insecurity.

Satan knows he cannot duplicate the sense of pleasure and contentment that is possible in marriage. Thus he masks the purpose of sex by focusing on the outward appearance of woman and the ability to entangle the man in a web of lies. These lies lead to sexual addiction, for the imitation lacks the satisfaction of the real thing. The real thing brings fulfilling companionship. Because Satan's substitute does not work, it is sought repeatedly in hopes of attaining that which it promises, but fails to deliver.

Understanding this principle leads to the discovery that no immoral person possesses true knowledge of the Lord's precious gift. God does not give knowledge of good to evil people. Satan perverts good and delivers as a substitute an immoral act incapable of providing a real sense of companionship. Instead, it provides just the opposite—a deep sense of emptiness and loneliness, making one hunger and yearn even more intensely.

Thus, if two people live together before marriage, they find after marriage that no fitting took place before the marriage because there was no commitment, and therefore no surrendering. If sex occurred with someone else, the fitting process is also affected.

One of the most unusual passages on immorality that has perplexed me for years is found in I Corinthians 6:18, where Paul warns the Corinthian church about illicit intercourse when he says:” Do you not know that he whoever joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her?” That phrase, I have come to understand, has many ramifications.

A cursory review of different immoral situations in scripture reveals some astounding similarities. Notice these similar qualities: obsessiveness, rejection, abandonment, jealousy, threat of death, or death. Vital consequences may be seen in relationships when moral laws are violated. Nor should it be surprising that those involved in immorality frequently find themselves caught up in violent interaction. Twenty-seven hundred years ago, scripture warned that violence and immorality go hand in hand.

Genesis 19 presents us with the situation of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. Lot has made his home in the most immoral center of its time, Sodom. The Lord sends two angels to investigate the situation, and here is what they find.

No sooner do they arrive in the city than Lot himself meets them at the city gates and begs them to come home and spend the evening with him.

They at first refuse but finally relent at his urging. After eating, but just before retiring, some of the outstanding citizens of the town start beating on the door, demanding that the visitors come out and play sex games with them. Well, it gets worse. The whole town seems to eventually get in on the fun surrounding the house and demanding the visitors be sent out for their sexual pleasure. Lot, a leading citizen goes out, and begs them to go away and leave his visitors alone. He even offers to send his virgin daughters out for their pleasure, just to have them leave these men alone. This intervention on Lot’s part merely serves to infuriate the city further, and they start to break down the door.

Nothing stops their demands to fill their sexual appetite. Notice the obsessions of these people, the possessive demands and eventual death threats. As one reads the passage, the naked violence of the situation reveals itself. The air is filled with criminal intent, and nothing will deter them.

The very next chapter reveals another situation involving Abraham. Here Abraham goes on a journey into the Negev or southern part of Palestine. Upon reaching Gerar, Abraham realizes the violent potential of the inhabitants of this city, and he decides it is best to protect his wife and himself (mainly himself) by referring to his wife as his sister. Subsequently, the King of the place decides to take Sarah to be his wife.

The text says that God appears to the king of that town, Abimelech, and tells him that he is a dead man for taking Sarah, for she is Abraham’s wife. Abimelech is frightened and begs, then demands, that Abraham take her back and get her out of his house.

Note the recurring element of potential violence over sexual possession, abandonment on Abraham's part, and threat of death. By the way, this is the second time Abraham has pulled this stunt. The results were the same both times.

An episode with Joseph puts a little different spin on the story in Genesis 39, when Joseph is approached by a sex-crazed woman (whose husband was the state executioner of Egypt). She will not leave Joseph alone. Eventually, she traps Joseph in the house, and he barely escapes half-naked. The husband finds out and throws Joseph in prison. Again, we see the elements of obsessiveness, rejection, possessiveness, and threat of death.

These are just a few examples revealing the same patterns in sexual behavior existing for four millennia. In each of these circumstances, we find conflict and violence. Let's now look at another biblical passage, which reveals the base emotion of obsessiveness and its subsequent outcome.

Amnon and Tamar

Here we find all the elements of obsessiveness, stalking, and ultimately hatred. The year is about 990 B.C. King Amnon is David's first-born son. Let's let the text speak.

¹Now Absalom, David's son, had a beautiful sister, whose name was Tamar; and after a time Amnon, David's son, loved her. ²And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar; for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her. ³But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shime-ah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. ⁴And he said to him, "O son of the king, why are you so haggard morning after morning? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom sister." ⁵Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Let my sister Tamar come and give me bread to eat, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand.'" ⁶So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill; and when the king came to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Pray let my sister Tamar come and make a couple of cakes in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

⁷Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, "Go to your brother Amnon's house, and prepare food for him." ⁸So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was lying down. And she took dough, kneaded it, made cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. ⁹And she took the pan and emptied it out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, "Send out every one from me." So every one went out from him. ¹⁰Then Amnon said to Tamar, "Bring the food into the chamber, that I may eat from your hand." And Tamar took the cakes she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. ¹¹But when she brought them near him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come, lie with me, my sister." ¹²She answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do this wanton folly. ¹³

As for me, where could I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the wanton fools in Israel. Now therefore, I pray you, speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you.”¹⁴ But he would not listen to her; and being stronger than she, he forced her, and lay with her.

¹⁵Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred; so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, “Arise, be gone.”¹⁶ But she said to him, “No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other which you did to me.”¹⁷ But he would not listen to her. ¹⁷He called the young man who served him and said, “Put this woman out of my presence, and bolt the door after her.”

Notice that phrase; “then Amnon hated her with very great hatred; so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her.” When we look at addictive sex patterns, as well as rape, this element of hate is always present. It drives the violence of rape, and the apathy of obsessive sexual encounters.

What does premarital and extra-marital sex mean in terms of a relationship? In a word; it means insecurity, constant comparison. With the man, the comparison is predominately physical; with the women, the comparison is romantic. In each case, conflict results. Proverbs 6:34 states that immorality makes a person furious and that there will be no mercy when they take revenge.

Although man may have sex “to enlarge his domain,” promiscuous sex is destructive. It is destructive physically, in that one may acquire all manner of disease. It is destructive emotionally, because intimacy is impossible. It is destructive spiritually, since God's Word expressly says that adultery will get one the hot place. The foolish man fails to recognize that this behavior robs him of his wealth, health, and heritage.

When one joins himself or herself with another person sexually, I suspect the bonding goes far beyond simple sex. I believe St. Paul suggests this when speaking with the church in Corinth. There is a mental bonding that occurs between the two people. There is a meshing of two different philosophies of life, a joining of two different thought processes. From this union, no matter how brief the contact, the two take certain beliefs and manners of life from the other individual. It is easy for us to accept that we take from the other person any disease they may have or disease they have received from other sexual contacts. In much the same manner, we have received mental, spiritual, and emotional influence as well. Given the likelihood of certain perverse thinking patterns, this is not a very pleasant thought.

When Paul addresses the consequences, they include an acceptance into one's being of every person with whom one has had sex. A physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual part of each partner is now a part of you.

Test this by briefly bringing to mind every person you might have been involved with. Can you sense the mental experience involved? Then recall details, the things the other person thought or shared? All of these pieces impact our own experience and responses. Our involvement may be regretted, but repentance does not wipe from our minds the process. If that person hated, we now carry a small part of that hate. If that person was paranoid, we now carry a piece of that fear.

In the relationship that God prescribed, sex brings closeness and mutual intimacy. The two individuals in the union have intense needs for each other. With pornography or fornication, the emphasis is on physical satisfaction for entertainment, not real intimacy.

Pornography both precedes and intensifies with immorality. Now some may be beguiled into thinking that pornography is a relatively recent invention in the history of mankind. However, pornography has been found in practically every major civilization extending back to the dawn of man with equally destructive results. While fornication destroys from the outside in, pornography destroys from the inward out.

Perhaps soaps and romantic novels can be just as destructive for women as porn is for men. Why? Because both cause a person to disassociate from reality.

The emotional destructiveness of immorality is apparent to all, but the effect is denied by most. Yet whether we acknowledge the results or not, the consequences remain not only for us but also for generations to come.

In conclusion, we can say with a great deal of assurance that these seven areas of our lives—health, wealth, honor, reason, heritage, inheritance, and relationships—are deeply affected by immoral behavior.

Aftermath

I acknowledge that a rather dark picture has been painted of the consequences of immorality. Some may wonder if there is any hope. Yes, there is, but perhaps not in the direction one would think.

Frequently, I give my clients an analogy to help them understand the difference between forgiveness and the price one pays. Let's say someone gets into an argument with his or her spouse, gets very angry, leaves the house, and drives reckless hitting a bridge abutment. In the accident, the individual loses an arm and a spleen. The person is remorseful, asking forgiveness of the spouse and others. The forgiveness is granted. Does the arm then grow back? Does the spleen regenerate itself? No, the person will have to live with those losses.

So it is with immorality. Once convicted by the Lord, one might not repeat the sin, but the consequences remain. The consequences are often so great that one says never again—that sin.

Furthermore, of all the sins we may commit, it seems to me that immorality, once forgiven, is least likely to be repeated. Let me explain. With immorality, a person knows they have sinned. It is black or white. One is either moral or immoral. In contrast, with other sins, the dividing line may not be as clear, and frequently repentance is either seen as unnecessary or rejected all together. Take bitterness, for example. Most of us would deny being bitter. Even if we are convicted of it, there is a tendency to quickly justify or excuse it. Jesus spends nearly the whole chapter of Matthew 18 dealing with the subject. Finally, He closes the chapter by warning of the torment (anxiety, depression, and financial loss) one will suffer by holding onto bitterness.

Or consider greed. Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to make it through the eye of a sewing needle than for the wealthy person to seek forgiveness.

Thus, in many ways, immorality is easier to deal with and set aside. To the woman taken in adultery in John 8, Jesus simply says: "Go thy way and sin no more." Contrast that with the paralyzed man of John 5, who was angry, bitter, friendless, and disloyal. Jesus warned him to stop it, or something even worse than a physical handicap, and total helplessness would befall him. The man did not heed the warning; indeed, that very day he betrayed Jesus to His enemies.

Some may wonder about grace. Grace does not remove the consequences, nor does it make the wrong right. Grace provides the strength to forsake the sin, and to acquire purity again before the Father.

It does not justify us before men, for this grace is of God, not of man. Salvation is a spiritual experience more rarely than a physical one. Let's face it: Ultimately it is what God thinks of us that is important. With the Lord, a new birth and a transformed life is possible.

About the Author

Dr. Jerry Stettheimer, Director of Christian Family Services Ministries, is a Clinical Member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists and is certified by the Texas Board of Marriage and Family Therapists. He earned a Doctorate in Ministry in the field of Counseling from Harding Graduate School. He has been in private practice for sixteen years. Dr. Stettheimer has authored numerous articles and conducted seminars and workshops in the areas of addiction, incest, family violence, biblical character training, the motivational gifts and Christian women's issues. Prior to establishing CHRISTIAN FAMILY SERVICES MINISTRIES, he served thirteen years as the Coordinator of Aftercare Services for the Substance Abuse Unit at Terrell State Hospital. He has been married to Mary Stettheimer for over thirty-six years and is the father of two and grandfather of four.

Dr. Stettheimer believes that God's Word provides the answers to life's problems and that difficult family problems provide an opportunity to acquire discipline and develop character. Regular participation in church and home devotionals is strongly encouraged in order to provide a firm foundation upon which character is built. It is through this process that enduring solutions are discovered and strong marriages created.

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