

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

Tough Topic Today: Living Sexually Pure in an X-Rated Society

We sent out a notice this week announcing my topic so that parents of young children would be prepared. Of course, I won't be saying anything I wouldn't address with my own grandchildren at the appropriate time, but parents need to make that call for themselves.

That said, here's a parenting tip: **teach your children about sex before their hormones hit.** *If you don't teach them, - someone else will.*

Anyway, we live in interesting times when it comes to the topic of sexuality. Sexuality as it relates to marriage and identity is a hot topic in our government, in the news, in our movies, in our schools, within church denominations, within our families and our friendships.

Now, the Bible speaks very specifically to these issues, while at the same time calling us as believes to love and show respect for people regardless of their choices. Judgment belongs to the Lord, not to us.

Look, I love a lot of people who don't practice holy living when it comes to many areas of their lives, which also includes sexual choices...**and** I'll continue to love and embrace them despite all that.

That said, it's really hard for some of those friends to believe I truly love them when they ask me what I think. It isn't easy to navigate through that.

Also, let me say this, I don't make it a point to discuss people's sexually unholy practices unless **(1)** I am asked by them to share my views **or (2)** they're seeking to participate in a ministry here at Discover Church – where we ask people to model holy living to the people they serve.

These are the only two reasons why I would speak to someone about their choices. **Why?** Because it isn't spiritually healthy to focus on other peoples less than holy practices when God wants me to focus on my own.

Today, however, our text demands that I address the topic publically. I hope you'll receive this truth knowing that, no matter where you are at, that I love you and want you to experience the best quality of life God desires for you.

So let me begin by reading our complete text for today.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-12 NIV, “As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you **how to live in order to please God**, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and **urge you** in the Lord Jesus to **do this more and more**. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. **It is God’s will** that you should be **sanctified** (purified – pure): that you should avoid **sexual immorality**; 4 that each of you **should learn to control your own body** in a way that is **holy and honorable**, not in **passionate lust** like the **pagans** (ethnee-nations), who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should **wrong** or **take advantage of** a brother or sister. **The Lord will punish** all those who commit **such sins**, as we told you and **warned you** before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to **live a holy life**. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does **not** reject a human being **but God**, the very God who gives you his **Holy Spirit**. **Now about your love** for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to **love each other**. And in fact, **you do love all** of God’s family throughout Macedonia. **Yet we urge you**, brothers and sisters, to do so **more and more**, and to make it your ambition to **lead a quiet life**: You should **mind your own business** and **work with your hands**, just as we told you, so that your daily life may **win the respect of outsiders** and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.”

Wow! So let me begin by saying... If you choose to live a life that is sexually holy or pure, you’ll be considered an oddball.

If you embrace what the Bible says about sexuality, you’ll be seen as following an outdated and offensive code of ethics.

Paul’s mission to the Gentile nations put him into the midst of cultures just like ours today. Jewish Paul must have seemed like he was from another planet or an alternate reality – just like I will seem to many in our day.

You remember the movie “**The Matrix**,” right!

In the Matrix the world is run by computers that have everyone fooled into thinking their existence is real. People are kept in a sleep state and fed their reality by malicious computers. Morpheus leads a small group of people who have awakened and escaped from that dream world. They invite Neo to join them but he’s skeptical. So Morpheus holds out his hands offering a red pill or a blue pill. He says, “I’m trying to free your mind, Neo, but only you can walk through the door.”

If Neo takes the blue pill, he'll dream on and continue his life of blissful ignorance, like everyone else. If he takes the red pill he will awaken to truth and reality.

When it comes to sex, most of the people in our society have taken the blue pill. People are so obsessed with sex and their sexual rights that it's almost like they're hypnotized. ***We live in an X-rated society today.***

When I was a kid, Playboy magazines were kept either under the counter at the local convenience store or up out of arms reach wrapped in a red cover. None of us kids were ever gutsy enough to buy one.

But today, well, we live in a sex-saturated world where anyone of any age can see any kind of sexual act with a couple of clicks of your mouse. It's no wonder that sexual sins & crimes are on the increase and out of control.

I mean, look at what happened just this last week in the news:

*In California's Riverside County, **64 people arrested** in human trafficking sting that was selling people into prostitution. **Two women** were rescued.*

*In Fort Lauderdale, Florida. **Two FBI agents were killed** and **3 wounded** taking out a child porn ring. Not just a porn ring, a "**child**" porn ring.*

How did we get here? Well, people's obsession with sex has fueled a global sex trafficking enterprise that is kidnapping woman and little children and enslaving them in order to feed the **passionate lust industry**.

This obsession with sex is ever expanding in its grip on our culture. **Stop taking the blue pill folks. God wants you to take the red pill**, the truth pill. He wants you to see the reality and benefits of a life lived from His perspective, not the world's.

Jesus is the red pill. He's **the way, the truth and the life**. God wants you to embrace the truth about **sexual holiness**, even though almost everyone around you is gobbling down the blue pills called **sexual freedom**.

The boundaries continue to be removed. That's why sex-trafficking and the proliferation of child-pornography exist. **Unbelievable – but true!**

People are just a click away from peeking in on those atrocities. And that lack of self-control is what's to blame for making this industry so lucrative.

As Paul instructs here, we need to live differently. We need to...

1 Thessalonians 4:4-6, “*learn to **control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable**, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; and that **in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister.**”*

When we let sexual passion control us, it ends up creating all kinds of unhealthy and unholy relationships. “...**People are taken advantage of.**” *Those people are our brothers and sisters, our husbands and wives, and our sons and daughters.*

Paul is saying **that is the end result of unbridled passionate lust.**

Family members are defrauded and taken advantage of. Husbands, wives, moms and dads, brothers and sisters are stolen away leaving a swell of broken-hearted people behind in the wake.

DEFRAUDED! That is a good word Paul! That’s what happens when people do not control their bodies in a way that is honorable or holy!

So with all that in mind, let me give you **three red truth-pills** about what the Bible teaches about sex.

If you chose to believe these, you will live in a totally different reality than what most people in society live in. But let me add, if you choose to control your body and use it in the way God designed – in an honorable and holy way, you’ll be happier than you ever dreamed. **So, here’s red pill #1...**

1. GOD CREATED SEX AND MEANT IT TO BE GOOD

Sex wasn’t created by Satan, or Hugh Hefner, or HBO, or by the internet.

Sex was created by the Holy God of heaven. He gave each of us a sex drive, a means of populating this wonderful planet in a supremely enjoyable and healthy manner.

When God created all the birds and fish and animals and Adam, He said, **“Be fruitful and increase in number.” Genesis 1:22,28.** Make babies!!

And as Adam looked at the animals God created, he realized something. Hey, for **every Mr. Giraffe**, there’s a **Mrs. Giraffe** and with **Mr. Rhino**, there

was a **Mrs. Rhino**. But Adam looked around and there was no **Mrs. Adam**. He was alone and God said, *“It’s not good for man to be alone.”*

So God put Adam to sleep and performed surgery, removing one of his ribs. ***You might say Adam had a spare rib and God turned it into a prime rib.***

When Adam woke up, he saw this beautiful creation named Eve. And he said, **“Whoa! Man.”** No actually, he said in **Genesis 2:23**,

“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.”

That’s what Adam said, and here’s what God said in **Genesis 2:24-25**:
“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”

This is the first reference to marriage and sex in the Bible—God brings them together (unites them) and then they become one, both naked, and yet they felt no shame. There was no embarrassment, because there was no twisted lustful self-centered mindset toward one another.

It wasn’t until Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that they’re view of their nakedness caused them to be ashamed. So *what was the first thing they did?*

Ooops! (cover up). They made fig leaf suits. Adam wasn’t picky. Eve probably added some sycamore, oak and maple leaves to her wardrobe. **That’s why we all wear clothes and have walk-in closets today.**

But that wasn’t how it was in the beginning. **God created sex to be good, beautiful and to accomplish His holy purpose** (*fill the earth He created*).

Now, here’s the **2nd red pill** of truth...

2. GOD CREATED SEX TO BE HOLY AND HONORED

1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 NIV, *“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should **avoid sexual immorality**; 4 that each of you should **learn to control your own body** in a way that is **holy and honorable**, 5 not in **passionate lust** like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or **take advantage of** a brother or sister.”*

Word for **sexual immorality: pornous**, (*basis for our word porno*)

Porneia: sexual immorality / fornication

Pornao: "to sell off"

Pornos: used of male prostitutes or anyone engaged in sexual immorality

We're instructed to **learn to Control** our sexual passions. *In what way? In a way that's **holy and honorable!** What's that mean? Interesting combo.*

Hebrews 13:4 NIV, "**Marriage** should be **honored** by all, and the marriage bed (*κοίτης* = *keypeace*) **kept pure (untainted)**, for God will judge the **adulterer and all the sexually immoral.**"

How do you control sexual passion in a holy and honorable way? Through marriage! Pretty simple! Paul explained to the Corinthians this same truth, that marriage is the solution to controlling one's bodily passions.

1 Corinthians 7:1-5, "Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But since sexual immorality is occurring, **each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.** 3 **The husband** should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have **authority over her own body but yields it to her husband.** In the same way, **the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.** 5 **Do not deprive each** other except perhaps by **mutual consent and for a time**, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your **lack of self-control.**"

God created marriage! Marriage is between a man and a woman. And sex is meant to be enjoyed by them within the context of marriage.

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES: GOD'S –

ANY SEXUAL ACT OUTSIDE MARRIAGE IS SINFUL

Society's Perspective –

Lineal digression – explain and then like a flood

Heavy flooding started in March of 2019 as heavy rains fell on frozen ground already bearing a deep load of winter snow. As the snow melted and the rains continued, water spread out across parts of South Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa. The Mississippi river slowly became a huge monster.

By the end of June, the flooding was so widespread that at least 11 states sought federal disaster funds. People living all along the Mississippi had to evacuate their homes. That entire area was declared a disaster area.

A river is a beautiful thing until it breaks beyond its boundaries.

Sex is like a powerful river. It's a beautiful thing, when it is kept within the boundaries of marriage. But when it goes beyond God's parameters, the result is always disastrous for those having to navigate through the hurt.

The Bible speaks clearly about the destructive nature of sexual sin. Both the natural consequences and God's punishment are things to be considered.

In our text, Paul's talking specifically to Christians about God's punishment.

1 Thessalonians 4:7-8, ***“The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.”***

Take warning Christians. Remember too the similar warning in Hebrews...

Hebrews 13:4 NIV, ***“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure untainted, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”***

Paul gets even more specific about the consequences for those who practice unholy living of any type in his 1st letter to the Corinthians...

1 Corinthians 6:9-11, ***“Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”***

Quite the list of sins here! I suspect that many of us here today are either presently guilty for some of the sins listed here or we were in the past.

None is any worse than the other, and as we can see, anyone who has committed them - can also be forgiven and cleansed.

Read my lips: God loves all these people listed

Pagans, adulterers, sexually immoral people of every kind, prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, people with addictions, abusive people, swindlers and scam artists, God loves you and can cleanse you and forgive you and change you through calling on Jesus and through the power of *"His Holy Spirit,"* (both *Thessalonians* and *Corinthians* mention this).

Now, instead of focusing on all of that - Let me focus for a moment on strengthening what God's calls sacred). **Sex within marriage.**

1 Corinthians 7:4, *"The wife does not have **authority over her own body but yields it to her husband.** In the same way, **the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.**"*

When you're married, you give your wife authority over your body so she can have her needs met and the wife gives up her body so the man can have his needs met.

Now, this isn't just about two individuals selfishly using the other to get their needs met. No it's more about each of them making sure the other is getting equal satisfaction and joy out of the sexual relationship.

That is why Paul is going back and forth with this situation there is equality. And on that basis he challenges them to mutually work through their issues.

1 Corinthians 7:5, *"**Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time,** so that you may **devote yourselves to prayer.** Then **come together again** so that Satan will not tempt you because of your **lack of self-control.**"*

When we're fighting, we're naturally prone to deprive the other person of getting what they need. Paul says, we shouldn't do that unless we have mutually agreed to do that for a specific time frame; one designed for us to go to the Lord in prayer seeking wisdom and guidance.

Then he says, but don't stay apart too long because if you do you open yourselves up to be tempted again. ***Tempted to what?***

1 Corinthians 7:2, "... *since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his **own** wife, and each woman with her **own** husband.*"

Self-control is necessary. When we stop enjoying sexual intimacy with the person we have given authority to over our body; we have given control to over our bodies, then self-control has to kick in and it has a tendency to bend under pressure.

That was what Paul was saying to the Thessalonians too.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, "*It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you **should avoid sexual immorality**; that each of you should **learn to control your own body...***" ***It takes a lot of effort!***

So GOD CREATED SEX AND MEANT IT TO BE GOOD, He CREATED SEX TO BE HOLY AND HONORED. Why?

3. SEXUAL PURITY IS ESSENTIAL TO WALK WITH GOD

All this begs the question, "*Why should I be sexually pure?*" Well, as a Christian: it is essential for us if we want to walk in fellowship with a holy and pure God.

God wants us to remain sexually pure if we aren't married, and He wants us to remain sexually pure within our marriage.

Surveys reveal that 99% of Christian men admit struggling with sexual temptation. The other 1% are lying. There is also a growing trend of females who are addicted to internet pornography.

I have even heard Christians in defending their sexual desires say, "*It's my body, I can do with it what I want. As long as I'm not hurting anyone else.*"

I'm sorry, but, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, your body is not your own. The Bible says, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body." (**1 Corinthians 6:20**)

The Bible is full of characters who messed up sexually. Lot committed incest. Abraham had sex with his wife's servant. Rahab was a prostitute. Samson was a one-man sexual tornado. David committed adultery.

These were real people like us who struggled with sexual issues. But God forgave them. So if you're struggling with sexual sin, don't despair.

Confess your sin to God. Turn away from that sin. Accept His forgiveness and move on.

Paul then moves on to share some additional instruction to empower us in our commitment to live a holy life. He says,

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, *"But we don't need to write to you about the importance of **loving each other**, for God himself has taught you **to love one another**. Indeed, you already show your love for all the believers throughout Macedonia. Even so, dear brothers and sisters, **we urge you to love them even more.**"*

Growing in our love for all is not only encouraged it is urged. True love keeps us from defrauding each other.

Paul follows up the lust talk with the love talk. Ironically, "love" is the very thing people use to justify their sexual immorality.

"I can't help who I love, and if I love them, the natural thing is to make love to them." NO! **God urges us to love everyone**, but **He forbids us to have sex with everyone**; or anyone we choose. It's reserved for marriage.

So, love must be pure, it must be honorable and it must be holy. Yes, love your boyfriend, love your girlfriend, love your sister, love your brother, love your friend's wife or husband. But love doesn't give you a pass on having sex with them. We must distinguish the difference between lust and God honoring holy love.

Having said all of that, let me end on the note I began with. Love people unconditionally, don't be judgmental, don't get in their faces about their unholy choices. You have to earn that right...

Paul ends by saying this: **1 Thessalonians 4:11-12**, *"Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before. 12 Then people who are not believers will respect the way you live, and you will not need to depend on others."*

IN CLOSING: We live in an x-rated culture. But don't take the blue pill and join the crowd. Instead, embrace the truth from God's Word and make a commitment to live a life of sexual purity!

Take the red pill. Jesus is the red pill. He's **the way, the truth and the life.** God wants you to embrace the truth about His Son who loved you so much He gave up everything for you. Give your life to Him, live a holy life, live a quiet life, work hard with your hands to do good. People who don't know the Lord will see your life and be drawn to your Lord. Go the other route and you risk leading people away from the God who is calling out to them.

*Receive this instruction it comes from **God himself**, the very God who gave you His son for your sins and who gives you his Holy Spirit to live an abundant life.*

Invitation:

Let's pray