

Explore the Bible: Sexual morality for believers

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- *The Explore the Bible lesson for April 3 focuses on 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.*

One branch of philosophy is epistemology—thinking about knowing. In his book *The Essentials of Christian Thought*, theologian Roger Olson expounds on this subject by asking: What can we know? How can we know it? Can we have an absolute certainty about anything?

The answers to these questions are important when believers stand firm on biblical morality. If the Bible is not the source of morality, then what is the baseline? The definition of morality is the conformity to ideals of right human conduct. It is a doctrine or system of moral conduct.

In post-modern times, right and wrong have become a difficult subject to handle. Only 20 years ago, Christian and biblical values influenced our morality. While most people in our country claim to be Christian, they might not agree with biblical morality based on their interpretation of the Scriptures.

Morality is what we believe (1 Thessalonians 4:1-5)

As Paul closes his letter to the Thessalonians, he wants to make sure they practice what they know. This is difficult for all believers. The distance between what I know to what I practice is abysmal. If we are to move from knowledge to practice, we must depend on the Holy Spirit. Paul was aware

of this truth. We all are fallen and broken, but the Holy Spirit in each believer empowers us to become what we were meant to be.

Paul states the believers he was addressing knew the commandments, and this should have provided guidance on how to live. The Bible becomes a moral compass in all regards, not only in what we should not do, but more in what we should do. What do we believe is right and wrong in a secular world? This is crucial to the way we live.

In post-modern times, there is an inclination to leave the Christian traditions and to experiment, seeking to discover new and better ways to enjoy the freedoms of Christianity. Sexual immorality is one of the oldest transgressions against God. It is imperative to make sure all believers are cognizant that our sexual identity is defined by God, created male and female. Sexual immorality in this context was the practice of the gentiles of fornication, incest, prostitution, adultery and homosexuality.

Morality is for our benefit (1 Thessalonians 4:6-10)

When God provides guidance about what we believe and what we practice, God does it for our benefit. God will not warn you away from something just to keep you from something good. This is one lie Satan presents since the fall of humanity. Our God wants us to find purpose and meaning in our sexual life within the confines of marriage. Therefore, it is imperative for parents to provide biblical guidance regarding sexual identity and to teach children about sexuality from the biblical perspective.

Sexual immorality includes any type of perversion, from child molestation to rape. Paul says, "No one should take advantage in this matter." The church cannot afford to ignore these issues but to stand strong in grace and truth. When we live a life pleasing to God, the believer will find

purpose and meaning in all areas of life. In the Bible, you can find many warnings against sexual immorality and how this sin has a different impact than other sins—not only in our spiritual life, but also in the physical life (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

Morality leads you to a good life (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

How do we measure Christian maturity? How do we know we are growing in Christ? Will it be by what we practice? Will it be by how many verses we know? In these verses, Paul wants to provide guidance from what he heard based on Timothy's report. We do not know what that was, but it seems that the Thessalonians were having issues about sexual immorality and life after death. Paul reminds them to aspire and to aim for a life with purpose and meaning. Lust is about a moment, but a quiet life is abundant, joyful and pleasurable. Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers to mind their own business. Why would Paul say that? Because there is a temptation to live life looking at other people's lives. How important is this today? Social media is not life, it is not the whole story. Many people who are portraying whole and full lives in social media are suffering depression.

God provides the right perspective on the meaning of life. When God calls something a sin, it is because he knows that practicing it will lead to a purposeless life. The mature Christian should not be afraid of the punishment for committing a sin, but realize that he or she will miss a blessing if they live outside the will of God. The question is: Are we allowing the Bible to be our source of morality?

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