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 Title: The Cross and Moral Purity - C  
 An Overview of 1 Corinthians 1-10: Part V – Chapters 5-7  
 Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12-7:5, Misc.  
 Theme:

The next question I would like us to consider in our study is, “What are the biblical safeguards in protecting us from immorality (7:1-5)?” However, before we look at the next question I need to set down two broad thoughts that form the foundation for the initial answer we will consider in this study.

### **First, keep your eyes on Christ.**

I cannot stress enough that our eyes must be on the author and finisher of our faith if we are to experience His victory in this area of moral purity. The battle against the flesh has already been won. It is not a battle of the will. God works in and through your will for the accomplishing of His end, but it is not as simple as you saying “I’ll never do that again.” You cannot do it; only God can and has. You are working from His victory, not for victory. Winning over the flesh is realizing that it is already done. It is living in light of His victory.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

Last Sunday (Feb. 5, 2006) many people watched the Pittsburgh Steelers win against the Seattle Seahawks in the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Superbowl contest. That is an historical fact. You can dispute the outcome; you can choose not to believe it; you can argue that neither team deserved to win; you might think the referees did a poor job calling the game; but nothing you do can change what happened. You can deny the outcome, but your denial will not alter the end. The Pittsburgh Steelers are the reigning champions in the NFL.

You could choose to live in denial concerning the Steelers winning, or you could try to make the Packers the victors, or you could think that something is lacking in their victory and you must now finish what they began, but what you should do is rest in what happened and joy in their joy.

The same is true concerning Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross and confirming resurrection. Scripture clearly sets forth the victory of Christ over the world (John 16:33), the flesh (Gal. 5:24), and the devil (John 16:11, Col. 2:15). Our battle against the flesh is done. We are now simply living out and in the victory that was accomplished.

You could live in denial and not believe it is enough, or you might want to believe that the flesh is actually winning, or you could be thinking that something is lacking in His victory and you must now finish what He began, but what you and I should do is rest in what happened and joy in His joy.

## ILLUSTRATION:

A man fell off a cliff, but managed to grab a tree limb on the way down. The following conversation followed:

“Is anyone up there?”

“I am here. I am the Lord. Do you believe me?”

“Yes, Lord, I believe. I really believe, but I can’t hang on much longer.”

“That’s all right if you really believe you have nothing to worry about. I will save you. Just let go of the branch.”

There was a moment’s pause, then: “Is anyone else up there?”

*Bits & Pieces, June 24, 1993, p. 3*

Friend, there is no other option. You can either try to hang onto the branch in your own strength or you can let go and believe God.

**Second, the commands of Scripture are consequences not causes in our relationship with Jesus Christ.**

I believe we have drifted in our understanding of the commands of the New Testament. Let me set forth some basic ideas.

- The commands of Scripture are not works of the flesh. Although we might think the unbeliever can “do” the commands, what they “do” and what we “do” are two different things (Gal. 5:19ff). The unbeliever can do all the commands of the New Testament as an expression of his old nature and the believer can do all the commands of the New Testament as an expression of his old nature. In fact, the old nature loves being religious.
- The commands of the Scripture are the fruit of the Spirit. Because of our union with Christ, the Holy Spirit works in us and through us His fruit. The question is how or when do I know that the fruit of the Holy Spirit is His and not mine. Consider the idea in Galatians 2:20, 5:22, Colossians 3:3, 4, John 15:5.
- The fruit of the Holy Spirit is the outworking of being in Christ (Phil. 2:12, 13).
- The commands of the New Testament are a picture of who Jesus is, what He has done, and who we now are in Him. Do you want to know what Jesus looks like? Then read the New Testament imperatives. Notice Matthew 11:28-30 and 1 John 5:3. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. His commandments are not burdensome.
- Although the command addresses the will of man, to think you are now capable of doing what God commands would be unfortunate. You and I do what He commands because He works and wills according to His good pleasure (Phil. 2:12, 13).
- The commands of the New Testament are not my focus. Jesus is my focus and as I focus on Him I look like the commands fulfilled.

- Why is there a possible disconnect between the New Testament command and my experience of obedience? I would argue that you are not focusing on Him. This entire thought is just as true in the area of moral purity as it is in the celebration of the marriage covenant as noted in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider the question, “What are the biblical safeguards in protecting us from immorality” and an answer as found in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

## II. What are the biblical safeguards in protecting us from immorality (7:1-5)?

In answer to the question, here is what Paul says concerning sexual purity for those who are single and for those who are married.

### A. If married (7:1-5)

Before we speak about marriage let me relate to you the following story.

#### ILLUSTRATION:

The speaker at our women’s club was lecturing on marriage and asked the audience how many of us wanted to “mother” our husbands. One member in the back row raised her hand.

The speaker asked somewhat incredulous, “You *do* want to ‘mother’ your husband?”

“Mother?” the woman echoed. “I thought you said ‘smother.’”

Contributed by Nancy P. Blinn, Reader’s Digest, October, 1993, p. 92

God has provided marriage as a possible safe guard against immorality. Marriage is a God-ordained union, but we would be foolish if we thought marriage will solve all your problems. Marriage has its own *unique opportunities for spiritual growth*. Verses 1 and 2 note marriage as a possible safe-guard to sexual immorality. Marriage, however, does not solve the problem of lust for the individual. Marriage can be a safe-guard against fornication, but if you think marriage will solve your lust problem you are deceived.

Marriage does have as one of its expressions physical intimacy. **This entire area needs redeeming.** We have allowed the world to shape our thinking as it relates to sexuality and its biblical expression.

For whatever reason, we think physical intimacy and relational intimacy are the same or that physical intimacy has only one expression. This is regrettable. Intimacy has as much to do with one’s intellect, volition, and

emotion as it does its physical expression. The marriage relationship can provide a platform for relational intimacy that is unprecedented in any other relationship.

Because of who we are as image bearers, God designed our sexuality to be fully expressed in the context of the marriage covenant where our personhood and relationship is accentuated. Listen carefully to the following statement.

“Any behavior which breaks the links between sex, personhood, and relationship is symptomatic of disorder.” (New Dictionary of Theology, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson, David F. Wright, J.I. Packer, “Sexuality,” D.H. Field, 638, c1988)

This is exactly what the world, the flesh, and the devil seek to do. Our culture peddles human flesh as if it were a purchasable commodity, emotionally detached, and disposable.

When you go back to 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Paul reiterates and stresses the uniqueness of the marriage relationship and its physical expression. In physical intimacy we are picturing the one-flesh relationship. Our culture has debased intimacy and makes it operate on a purely physical plane. The Bible teaches us that physical intimacy is more than just sex. Physical intimacy is a celebration of our union with Christ. It is shouting the goodness, greatness, and graciousness of God in the redemption of His people.

For those of you who are married, focus on the relational side of your relationship with your spouse. For those of you who are looking to get married, focus on the relational side of your relationship with your future spouse.

The Bible elevates gender relationships. In verses 1 and 2, the Bible grants equality to women where none once existed. This whole study is genderless. It is not about stereo-types or caricatures. The Bible speaks to both genders equally.

Now, with that said, let me comment on the marriage relationship. There are two big ideas contained in this passage.

1. Honor the marriage bed (Heb. 13:4).

Physical intimacy is not something that is to be tolerated, but rather celebrated. God approves of and provides for this level of intimacy and it is done in the context of the marriage covenant. Why did God give us this expression of intimacy? There are two basic reasons as to why the marriage bed exists.

- a. For the purpose of procreation (Gen. 1:28).
- b. For the picturing of our relationship with God (Eph. 5:25-32).

No matter how imperfect your relationship is with your spouse, when that communion is made it can picture for us what our relationship with God is to be like.

The second idea is found in verse 3.

## 2. Fulfill your responsibilities in marriage (7:3)

Remember 1 Corinthians 6:20? God is glorified in the proper use of one's body and intimacy inside of the marriage covenant is a means God has chosen to bring glory to His name. It is an expression of our individual and relational worship.

### B. If single (7:1, 5, 9).

#### 1. Practice self-control (7:5, 9)

Our word "self-control" is representative of several different words in the Greek text. The word used in verse 5 for self-control means "without restraint." It is used only twice in the New Testament (Matt. 23:25 "self-indulgence") and here. The noun is used in 2 Timothy 3:3 ("without self-control").

The word for self-control or its absence is derived from "force." The person who is master of himself is self-controlled. The one who cannot contain himself, who is lacking in power, is without control.

Self-control is to be a characteristic of the believer (1 Cor. 9:25, 2 Pet. 1:6). It is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23). It is a quality of being a biblical elder in the local church (Titus 1:8). Its absence is a characteristic of the unbeliever (2 Tim. 3:3).

Self-control is not joyless Christianity. Learning to curb one's appetites regardless as to their expression is a good thing. Living a life of self-control is one of the keys to living a contented life.

## 2. Get married

Before I speak about marriage let me lead with this playful, but valid counsel.

## ILLUSTRATION:

A woman went to see her pastor about difficulties she was having in her marriage. The pastor got out his note pad, and proceeded to ask her some questions.

“Do you have any grounds?” he inquired.

“Oh, yes,” she replied. “About three-quarters of an acre.”

The pastor paused for a moment, then queried, “Do you have a grudge?”

“No,” the woman answered quickly. “But we do have a lovely carport.”

Again the pastor paused and then asked, “Does he beat you up?”

“No. I get up before he does every morning,” the woman reported.

Finally the pastor blurted, “Lady, why are you frustrated with your husband?”

“It’s because,” she explained, “that man can’t carry on an intelligent conversation.”

Brent Barlow in Salt Lake City *Deseret News*

Should you chose marriage, be ready to live your life trying to understand your spouse.

If you do not have the gift of celibacy, then by all means get married. You might say, “It sounds good, but I have no one waiting in the wings to get married.” Do not despair. God is faithful should you remain single or get married.

## APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here?)

1. Believe that the victory is yours. Do not lose sight of what is already true.
2. Be content with the spouse you have. Celebrate the relationship you already have.
3. If you cannot be single, then seek the Lord’s will concerning marriage.

Next week we will examine the general guidelines for promoting biblical sexuality and protecting against unbiblical immorality.