

## ***GOD'S CALL TO SEXUAL HOLINESS***

*(Ephesians 5:3-4)*

We live in a culture that is swimming in the cesspool of sexual sins. We live in a society of unbridled indulgence in sexual passions. The sad news though is this: If secular society is sexually promiscuous, professing Christians are not much different. Paul's pastoral exhortation to the Christians in Ephesus must be heeded as a clarion call to the church to be sexually holy and distinct from the immoral culture of the unbelieving world. In moving from darkness to light, we as Christians must live a life of sexual holiness which suits our new identity in Christ. Let's consider then two key principles on how we could live a holy life in a sexually debased society.

**1. *Cultivate a life of \_\_\_\_\_ in behavior, thought and speech.***

If we are to sum up Paul's exhortation to us Christians to live a pure and holy life, it could be stated this way: By God's enabling grace, cultivate a life of purity by eliminating and renouncing every form of sinful sexual behavior, obscene thought and filthy speech. In Ephesians 5:3, Paul identifies the sinful sexual behaviors that we must put away by using three terms. The first term is sexual immorality which broadly pertains to sexual activity of any kind outside a committed marriage relationship between a man and a woman. Sex as a sacred gift from our holy God must be enjoyed reverently, faithfully and passionately between a man and a woman in the covenant of marriage (1 Cor. 7:2-3; Heb. 13:4). However, any sexual activity outside the bounds of the marriage covenant is sinfully defiling and utterly displeasing to God (Eph. 5:6). The second term Paul uses when he discusses sexual sin is the word impurity. This refers to sexually immoral thoughts, lustful passions, and sexually corrupted ideas and fantasies (Matt. 5:27-28). The third term is covetousness or greed which is the insatiable sexual desire for someone else's body for selfish gratification (Exod. 20:17). Any sexual activity outside of marriage is but an expression of self-centered greed and inward covetousness which seek to exploit the other person for one's selfish advantage.

In Ephesians 5:4, Paul puts a spotlight on our sexual purity in the realm of speech. Our everyday language and daily conversations must also be free from filthiness, foolish talk and crude joking which make light of the sacredness of sex and make it something vulgar and dirty. All these sexual sins in behavior, thought and speech must be resisted and renounced for they are not proper and fitting for those who are saved in Christ and set apart as God's holy people.

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**2. *Cultivate a life of \_\_\_\_\_.***

In the latter part of Ephesians 5:4, Paul exhorts us to replace sexual immorality with a life of unceasing thankfulness and gratitude. When we honor God as our Creator and give Him thanks as our Savior, our hearts respond with a desire to please God and live a holy lifestyle that glorifies His name (Rom. 1:21; Eph. 5:20). If each day of our life we make it our constant habit to give thanks to God for His undeserved grace of salvation, our heart will overflow with unceasing praise to God for His goodness and lovingkindness (Eph. 1:3-14). Sexual sin does not have a place in the heart of a grateful Christian. We must constantly give thanks to God not only for His saving grace but also for His sustaining and sanctifying grace upon our lives whether we are married or single (Prov. 5:18; Mark 10:8; 1 Cor. 7:9; Psalm 107:8-9).

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