

Moral Issues Confronting Christians



Discerning The Truth On Various Moral Issues

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To God Be The Glory!

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Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Table Of Contents

Authority In Morality	3
Sexual Immorality	5
The Institution Of Marriage	8
Divorce And Remarriage	11
Homosexuality	14
Abortion	17
Domestic Violence	21
Euthanasia	23
Gambling	26
Alcohol	29
Tobacco	31
Dancing	33
Immodest Apparel	37
Dishonesty	40

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Authority In Morality

INTRODUCTION

1. Christians today are confronted with many conflicting views of morality...
 - a. People have different opinions concerning what is right and wrong
 - b. What once was generally accepted as good and true is now challenged
 - c. Governments are redefining the concept of marriage
 - d. Businesses often operate with ethics that sanction lying, stealing
2. How does one know what is right and wrong in areas of morality...?
 - a. Everyone has a sense of right and wrong
 - b. But the standard of right and wrong often differs

[The answer for the Christian is simple. But before we consider it, let's first review...]

I. WHAT MANY ACCEPT AS AUTHORITY IN MORALITY

A. THEIR FEELINGS...

1. **"If it feels good, it must be right"**
 2. The Bible warns against trusting in "feelings"
 - a. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." - **Pro 14:12**
 - b. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool..." - **Pro 28:26**
 - c. "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." - **Jer 10:23**
- **Many people have destroyed themselves by following their feelings**

B. THEIR CONSCIENCE...

1. **"Let your conscience be your guide"**
 2. But one's conscience is not always reliable
 - a. Paul had served God with a good conscience throughout his life - **Ac 23:1**
 - b. Even at a time when he was persecuting Christians! - cf. **Ac 26:9-11**
- **Our conscience is like a clock, which works properly only if set properly**

C. THEIR FRIENDS...

1. **"Everyone else is doing it"**
 2. But consider the words of Jesus, in describing the end of the majority - **Mt 7:13-14**
 3. If you followed the majority...
 - a. In Noah's day, you would have perished in the flood
 - b. In Joshua's day, you would have perished in the wilderness
- **Following the majority can be like lemmings running over a cliff**

D. THEIR MINISTERS...

1. **"The preacher (priest, rabbi, etc.) says it is okay"**
2. They reason that surely these "men of God" could not lead them astray
3. Yet notice the warnings given by Jesus, Paul and Peter

- a. Religious leaders can be “blind leaders of the blind” - **Mt 15:12-14**
 - b. They can be “ministers of Satan” - **2Co 11:13-15**
 - c. There will be false teachers with destructive ways - **2Pe 2:1-3,12-15,17-19**
- **Following the wrong minister can lead to corruption**

[It is clear that what many people accept as authority in morality should not be a guide for Christians. So let's now consider what should be...]

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S AUTHORITY IN MORALITY

A. JESUS HAS ALL AUTHORITY...

1. In heaven and on earth - **Mt 28:18**
 2. In all areas, including sexual mores and behavior - **Ep 4:17-24**
 3. He will one day judge all mankind - **Ac 17:30-31**
 4. And the standard of judgment will be His words - **Jn 12:48**
- **Jesus is the ultimate standard of authority in morality**

B. JESUS DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO HIS APOSTLES...

1. To receive them is to receive Him - **Mt 10:40; Jn 13:20**
 2. They were sent as “ambassadors” for Christ - **2Co 5:20**
 3. To ensure reliability, Jesus promised them the Holy Spirit - **Jn 14:26**
 4. The Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth - **Jn 16:12-13**
 5. Thus the apostles proclaimed “the whole counsel of God” - **Ac 20:27**
 6. Christians were to accept the apostles' words as truth - cf. **1Co 14:37**
- **The apostles' doctrine is the Christians' standard of authority (Ac 2:42)**

C. THEIR AUTHORITY PERTAINS TO AREAS OF MORALITY...

1. As Paul solemnly charged the church in Thessalonica - **1Th 4:1-8**
 - a. Addressing sexual immorality
 - b. And marital faithfulness
 2. As he likewise wrote to the church in Ephesus - **Ep 4:17-32**
 - a. Addressing lewdness, greediness, and deceitful lusts
 - b. And lying, anger, stealing, foul language
- **Morality is an integral part of “the truth” that is in Jesus**

CONCLUSION

1. Many people go through life confused about morality...
 - a. They constantly wonder: “Is this right or wrong for me?”
 - b. They stumble their way through life, making wrong choices with terrible consequences
2. The Christian need not be confused about morality...
 - a. The truth is in Jesus - cf. **Ep 4:21**
 - b. God has given us “all things that pertain to live and godliness” - **2Pe 1:3**

If you are looking for truth as it pertains to morality, then let Jesus and His apostles be your guide. As Jesus said...

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” - Jn 14:6

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Sexual Immorality

INTRODUCTION

1. As we begin addressing specific moral issues confronting the Christian, perhaps a proper starting place is with the issue of **sexual immorality**...
 - a. A moral issue faced by every Christian
 - b. One about which the Bible has much to say - cf. **1Th 4:3; 1Co 6:18**
2. The admonition to “**Flee sexual immorality**” is needed just as much today...
 - a. Sexual immorality is rampant in our culture
 - b. Morality is being loosely defined (and redefined), encouraging many to engage in sinful behavior

[Those who follow Christ must have a clear understanding of sexual immorality and its dangers. So let us first begin with...]

I. THE DEFINITION OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

A. THE BASIC CONCEPT...

1. The Greek word translated sexual immorality (NKJV), fornication (KJV), is **porneia**
2. “Used generally to refer to any sexual sin” - **The Complete WordStudy Dictionary**
3. Thus it includes any form of “illicit sexual intercourse - adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals, etc.” - **Thayer**

B. THE PROBLEM THEN AND NOW...

1. **Porneia** became synonymous with life in the 1st century, reflected by:
 - a. **Their attitude toward adultery:** “We keep mistresses for pleasure, concubines for day-to-day needs of the body, but we have wives in order to produce children legitimately and to have a trustworthy guardian of our homes” - **Demosthenes**
 - b. **Their attitude toward divorce:** “Roman women were married to be divorced and were divorced to be married. Some of them distinguished the years, not by the names of the consuls, but by the names of their husbands.” - **Seneca**
 - c. **Their attitude toward family:** “Caligula lived in incest with his sister Drusilla, and the lust of Nero did not even spare his mother Agrippina.” - **Suetonius**
 - d. **Their attitude toward homosexuality:**
 - 1) “It were better not to need marriage, but to follow Plato and Socrates and to be content with the love of boys.” - **Lucian**
 - 2) “Of the first fifteen emperors, Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct.” - **Gibbons**
2. God's disdain for sexual immorality is seen in the fact...
 - a. There are seven lists of evil in the writings of Paul
 - b. **Porneia** is listed in five of them, and is **the first** in each of them - **1Co 5:9-11; 6:9-10; Ga 5:19-22; Ep 5:3-5; Co 3:5**
3. Does it require much insight to see that **porneia** is rampant in our time as well?
 - a. Pre-marital sex has become rampant among many, including teenagers
 - b. Adultery is considered inevitable, even acceptable by many

- c. Divorce has been made easy through “no-fault” laws
- d. Families have been torn asunder by incest, adultery, and divorce
- e. Homosexuality has become an “acceptable alternative lifestyle”

[**Porneia** is thus a general term for sexual immorality; i.e., sexual behavior between unmarrieds that rightly belongs only to husbands and wives (cf. **He 13:4**). Prohibitions against sexual immorality can be appreciated when we understand...]

II. THE DEVASTATION OF SEXUAL IMMORALITY

A. DESTROYS THE BODY...

- 1. Through bacterial STDs (e.g., Chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea)
- 2. Through viral STDs (e.g., genital herpes, Hepatitis B, AIDS), which are incurable
- 3. Many people have learned the hard way, what Solomon warned his son - cf. **Pro 5:11-12**

B. DEMOLISHES THE HOME...

- 1. Marriages intended for life are broken, often beyond repair - cf. **Mt 19:4-6**
- 2. Children are devastated, with emotional effects lasting into adulthood - cf. **Mal 2:16**
- 3. Potential for future marriages is lessened (who desires “damaged goods” due to STDs?)

C. DESOLATES THE SOUL...

- 1. It will be hard to forgive oneself, there will be self-recrimination - cf. **Pro 5:12-13**
- 2. Your soul will be deprived of good friends, whose trust you violated - cf. **Pro 6:30-35**
- 3. If unrepented and unforgiven, there is no hope - cf. **1Co 6:9-10; Ga 5:19-21; He 13:4**

[We can see why Paul wrote “**Flee sexual immorality.**” (**1Co 6:18**) It is not to be taken lightly! That we might succeed in fleeing sexual immorality, here are some thoughts regarding the...]

III. THE DETERRENCE OF SEXUALITY IMMORALITY

A. FORM PROPER DISCERNMENT...

- 1. Remember God’s will for you
 - a. Joseph understood that sexual immorality was a sin against God - **Gen 39:9**
 - b. Paul taught that abstinence was God’s will - **1Th 4:1-3**
- 2. Remember God’s will for your body
 - a. To control your body in holiness and honor (ESV) - **1Th 4:4-8**
 - b. To glorify God in your body, as a temple of the Holy Spirit - **1Co 6:13-20**
 - c. To present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy to God - **Ro 12:1-2**
- 3. Remember the consequences
 - a. Self-recrimination - **Pro 5:12-13**
 - b. Lost friendships - **Pro 6:30-35**
 - c. Judgment against the impenitent - **1Co 6:9-10; He 13:4**
 - d. David’s sin with Bathsheba serves as an object lesson - **2 Sam 11-12**

B. FLEE EVERY OPPORTUNITY...

- 1. Remember Joseph’s example! - **Gen 39:10-12**
- 2. Remember the wisdom of Solomon! - **Pro 5:1-23; 6:23-35; 7:1-27**
- 3. Remember Paul’s admonitions!
 - a. Flee youthful lusts, pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace - **2 Ti 2:22**

- b. Make no provision for the lusts of the flesh - **Ro 13:13-14**

C. FIND A SUITABLE SPOUSE...

1. Paul counsels marriage between man and woman to counter sexual immorality - **1Co 7:1-2**
2. Sexual conduct within the framework of marriage is appropriate - **1Co 7:3-5**; cf. **He 13:4**
3. Singleness is good, if one has self-control; otherwise, marriage the only option - **1Co 7:6-9**

D. FORGE AHEAD WITH STRENGTH FROM GOD...

1. United with Christ in baptism, consider yourself dead to sin - **Ro 6:2-15**
2. By the Spirit, put to death the sinful deeds of the body - **Ro 8:12-13**; cf. **Co 3:5-7**
 - a. The Spirit is God's instrumental agent to strengthen the Christian - **Ep 3:16,20**
 - b. The fruit of the Spirit in our lives includes self-control - **Ga 5:16-17,19,22-25**
3. In Christ, we can do all that God desires of us - **Ph 4:13**; **Ep 6:10-13**
4. Utilize the tools of prayer and the Word of God - cf. **Ep 3:16**; **6:17**

CONCLUSION

1. To prevent the devastating effects of sexual immorality, **we need to remember...**
 - a. God's will for us: "abstain from sexual immorality" - **1Th 4:3**
 - b. Paul's admonition: "flee sexual immorality" - **1Co 6:18**
2. Sexual immorality is too serious to take lightly...
 - a. It can destroy your body, home, and soul
 - b. Forgiveness is possible, but physical consequences of sin (STDs) often remain
3. To flee sexual immorality, **we need to have...**
 - a. The rectitude of Joseph
 - b. The wisdom of Solomon
 - c. The penitence of David (when necessary)

Let these words of Paul encourage us to abstain from sexual immorality, and to repent if need be...

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

- 1Co 6:9-11

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

The Institution Of Marriage

INTRODUCTION

1. Another moral issue that confronts Christians today relates to the institution of marriage...
 - a. Many people are clamoring to redefine marriage
 - b. Governments are responding with laws that redefine who may marry
 - c. Same-sex marriage is becoming legal; polygamy and other forms of marriage will likely follow
2. As Christians are confronted with this issue, we do well to ask...
 - a. What did Jesus and His apostles reveal about marriage?
 - b. What do they say about same-sex marriage?
 - c. How should we respond to those in same-sex marriages?

[We begin therefore by looking at...]

I. JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES ON MARRIAGE

A. JESUS' TEACHING ON MARRIAGE...

1. Marriage was instituted by God at the beginning - **Mt 19:3-4**
 - a. Weddings may be a social custom, and variously defined by cultures
 - b. But marriage itself is ordained by God, not by society or the state
 2. Marriage was designed for those created male and female - **Mt 19:4**
 - a. From the beginning this was God's design
 - b. Beginning with Adam and Eve (not Adam and Steve)
 3. Marriage is for man and wife, who become 'one flesh' - **Mt 19:5**
 - a. A man is to leave his family to start a new one
 - b. Man and woman are biologically designed to complement each other
 4. Marriage is a union that God joins, not the state - **Mt 19:6**
 - a. **Note well:** only God does the joining
 - b. The state cannot force God to do something by passing laws
 5. States may therefore declare marriages that are unlawful in God's sight - cf. **Mk 6:17-18**
 - a. Herod had "married" Herodias, i.e., approved by the state
 - b. But in God's sight it was "not lawful" for him to have her
- **Jesus defined marriage as instituted and regulated by God, not the state**

B. THE APOSTLES' TEACHING ON MARRIAGE...

1. Sex in marriage is honorable, sex outside marriage is not - **He 13:4**
 - a. God will judge fornicators (any who practice sexual immorality, see previous lesson)
 - b. God will judge adulterers (any who violate the bond involving those married)
 2. To avoid fornication, let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband
 - a. The solution to sexual immorality is heterosexual marriage - **1Co 7:1-5**
 - b. The only alternative is self-control - **1Co 7:6-9**
- **The apostles taught marriage is regulated by God and His Word**

[Both Jesus and His apostles have important things to say about divorce as it relates to the institution of marriage, but we will discuss that in another lesson. Let's now turn our attention to...]

II. THE ISSUE OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

A. WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES...

1. Again we note what the Bible clearly teaches:
 - a. Sex outside of marriage is sinful (see previous lesson)
 - 1) Whether heterosexual or homosexual
 - 2) It falls into the category of "sexual immorality" (fornication)
 - b. The solution to sexual immorality is clearly stated
 - 1) Either heterosexual marriage - **1Co 7:1-5**
 - 2) Or self-control - **1Co 7:6-9**
 - c. Marriage is a divine institution, not a civil one
 - 1) God determines what constitutes a proper marriage, not man
 - 2) Marriage throughout the Bible is always between a man and woman
2. We now note the following:
 - a. There is not one mention regarding same-sex marriage
 - 1) Even though the practice was known among the Gentiles
 - 2) Emperor Nero himself had two same-sex marriages (Pythagoras, Sporus)
 - b. There is no Biblical teaching on how same-sex marriages are to work
 - 1) Who is to be the head? Who is to submit?
 - 2) All discussions pertaining to marriage describe husband-wife (male-female) relationships - **1Co 7:10-40; Ro 7:1-4; Ep 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; 1Ti 3:2,11-12; 5:14; Tit 1:6; 2:4-5; 1Pe 3:1-7**

-- **At best, the Bible is silent regarding same-sex marriage; of course, there is the issue of homosexuality itself (to be discussed later)**

B. HOW CHRISTIANS SHOULD RESPOND...

1. Same-sex marriage is on par with other unscriptural marriages
 - a. Divorce and remarriage can lead to adulterous marriages (see next lesson)
 - b. Governments have sanctioned adulterous marriages for years
 - c. Many Christians have friends and family involved in such marriages
 - d. As same-sex marriages become common, so will our acquaintance with such
 - e. We must stand firm in support of truth concerning the institution of marriage
2. As with all people engaged in sinful behavior, we should:
 - a. Love the sinner while hating the sin
 - b. Speak the truth in love, not hate - **Ep 4:15**
 - c. Reach out with gentleness, patience, humility - **2Ti 2:24-26**
 - d. Convert them to Jesus as Savior and Lord (willing to obey in all things) - **Mt 28:18-20**
 - e. We should certainly not fault the children - cf. **Eze 18:20**
3. As "citizen saints" and "pilgrim priests" living in a free society, we should:
 - a. Pray for our leaders, that we may live peaceable, godly lives - **1Ti 2:1-4**
 - b. Live as sojourners and pilgrims, setting honorable examples - **1Pe 2:11-12; Ro 12:1-2**
 - c. Vote for those who respect God's Word on such issues, for it can only "insure domestic tranquility...promote the general welfare" of one's country - cf. **Pr 14:34**

-- **Our response should be no different than with any other sin**

CONCLUSION

1. The institution of marriage has long been under attack...
 - a. Divorce and remarriage for any reason has undermined it for generations
 - b. Same-sex marriage is only the latest attack; it probably won't be the last
 - c. Many choose to simply cohabit rather than marry at all

2. As Christians confronted with such attacks, let us...
 - a. Remain true to the teachings of Christ and His apostles
 - b. Illustrate by way of example that God's way is good, acceptable and perfect
 - c. Reach out to all who are lost in sin with both the truth and love that is in Jesus Christ

Always remembering that when it comes to the institution of marriage...

Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge. - Heb 13:4

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Divorce And Remarriage

INTRODUCTION

1. A troubling trend was revealed by a recent survey from The Barna Group...
 - a. So-called “born again Christians” are just as likely to divorce as are non-Christians
 - b. Among married born again Christians, 35% have experienced a divorce
 - c. That figure is identical to the outcome among married adults who are not born again: 35%.
 - d. Barna's figures show that nearly 1/4th of the married born agains (23%) get divorced two or more times

-- cf. The Barna Group (<http://www.barna.org>)
2. The apparent reason? Evidently many do not believe divorce can be sinful...
 - a. Although Bible scholars and teachers point out that Jesus taught that divorce was a sin unless adultery was involved, few Americans buy that notion
 - b. Only one out of every seven adults (15%) strongly agreed with the statement “when a couple gets divorced without one of them having committed adultery, they are committing a sin”
 - c. A majority of both Protestants (58%) and Catholics (69%) disagreed that divorce without adultery involved the commission of sin

-- **ibid.**

[A survey like this reveals the need for constant reminder of what God has spoken concerning divorce and remarriage. It is truly an issue confronting Christians today, and so let us consider....]

I. JESUS ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

A. HIS TEACHING ON DIVORCE...

1. In His sermon on the mount - **Mt 5:31-32**
 - a. Many scribes and Pharisees taught that divorce was permissible for any reason, as long as a certificate of divorce was granted
 - 1) Technically it was - cf. **Deut 24:1-4**
 - 2) But the effect was to defile the wife when she remarried - **Deut 24:4**
 - 3) **Note well:** her remarriage “defiled” her!
 - 4) “The second marriage of a woman who had been divorced is designated by Moses a defilement of the woman...a moral defilement, i.e., blemishing, desecration of the sexual communion which was sanctified by marriage, in the same sense in which adultery is called a defilement in **Lev 18:20** and **Num 5:13,14.**” - **Keil & Delitzsch**
 - 5) “Thus **the second marriage** of a divorced woman was placed implicit upon a **par with adultery**, and some approach was made towards the teaching of Christ concerning marriage (**Mt 5:32**)...” - **ibid.**
 - b. Jesus taught that divorce led to adultery, unless fornication was the cause of divorce
 - c. **Note well:** the bill of divorce did not necessarily end the first marriage!
 - 1) Jesus described the second marriage as committing “adultery”
 - 2) The term “adultery” implies the first marriage is still valid (binding)
2. In His response to the Pharisees - **Mt 19:3-9**
 - a. The Pharisees thought divorce was permissible, as long as a certificate was granted

- b. Though they differed among themselves as to whether it could be “for any reason”
 - c. Jesus explained that Moses permitted divorce because of the hardness of their hearts, but it was not God’s will from the beginning (of creation) - **Mt 19:8**
 - d. Jesus then provides the only ground for divorce without it leading to adultery: if the innocent spouse puts away his or her spouse for fornication - **Mt 19:9**
- **Jesus allows only one reason for divorce: when a spouse is guilty of fornication!**

B. HIS TEACHING ON REMARRIAGE...

- 1. Jesus warned twice that remarriage can result in adultery
 - a. Divorcing a wife can cause her to commit adultery when she remarries - **Mt 5:32**
 - b. Divorcing a wife for can cause oneself to commit adultery upon remarriage - **Mt 19:9**
 - 2. The only way to avoid adultery when remarrying is for the innocent spouse to put away his or her spouse for the cause of fornication - **Mt 19:19**
 - 3. Jesus suggested celibacy might be necessary for some - **Mt 19:10-12**
 - a. Chosen for the sake of the kingdom of heaven
 - b. The only scenario I can imagine is where one realizes they are in adulterous marriage and are willing to leave it for the sake of the kingdom of heaven
- **Jesus allows only one reason for divorce and remarriage: when a spouse is guilty of fornication!**

[In teaching His disciples concerning divorce and remarriage, Jesus was very clear. But what about His apostles? Inspired by the Holy Spirit, what do they add to the subject...?]

II. THE APOSTLES ON DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

A. THEIR TEACHING ON DIVORCE...

- 1. Paul reminded people of what the Lord Himself taught - **1Co 7:10-11**
 - a. A wife is not to depart her husband; a husband is not to divorce his wife
 - b. If a wife leaves her husband, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled
 - 2. He revealed more concerning marriages with unbelievers - **1Co 7:12-16**
 - a. Believers are not to divorce unbelieving spouses if they are willing to live with them
 - b. If unbelieving spouses depart, believers are not in bondage (to fulfill marital duties)
- **Paul reinforced Jesus’ teaching on divorce, and permitted separation only when initiated by an unbeliever!**

B. THEIR TEACHING ON REMARRIAGE...

- 1. Paul in writing to the Romans - **Ro 7:1-4**
 - a. Paul used what the Law taught on marriage for the purpose of illustration
 - b. The Law (of Moses) taught that a woman was bound to her husband for life
 - c. Even if she legally divorced her husband, she became an adulteress when she remarried
 - d. Remember, according to Moses she became “defiled” - **Deut 24:4**
- 2. Paul allowed remarriage after the death of one’s spouse - **1Co 7:39-40**
 - a. But only “in the Lord”, which many believe to mean “must be a Christian”
 - b. But it may mean “in the will of the Lord” (in harmony with His teaching)
- 3. Some assume Paul permitted remarriage if abandoned by an unbeliever - **1Co 7:15**
 - a. That “not in bondage” means they are permitted to remarry
 - b. But such permission is not necessarily implied by the text; believers are simply not in bondage to fulfill marital duties
 - c. To say that Paul allowed remarriage is to put words in his mouth

- **Paul allowed remarriage on the death of a spouse; only Jesus gave another ground for remarriage (fornication)**

[Other than saying that a believing spouse was not obligated to fulfill marital obligations toward an unbelieving spouse who leaves, and that death permitted remarriage under certain circumstances, the apostles added nothing to what Jesus taught. With that in mind, here are some thoughts on...]

III. THE ISSUE OF DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE TODAY

A. PERTAINING TO CHRISTIANS...

1. As disciples of Christ we must be faithful to the Lord - cf. **Lk 6:46; 2Jn 1:9**
 2. This requires heeding Him in both teaching and practice - cf. **Mt 28:20**
 3. As with all sin, it may take time to fully learn and apply what Jesus taught - **2Pe 3:18**
 4. Even if it means we must choose celibacy to be faithful to His teaching - **Mt 19:12**
 5. In this way, we can demonstrate that God's will is good, acceptable, perfect - **Ro 12:1-2**
- **Rather than conform to the world, allow Christ to transform us!**

B. PERTAINING TO NON-CHRISTIANS...

1. They should be taught the gospel - **Mk 16:15-16; Mt 28:18-19**
 2. If they are baptized, they need to be shown what Jesus taught - **Mt 28:20**
 3. Some may ask, "Cannot those in adulterous marriages be forgiven?"
 - a. Yes, but forgiveness does not make an adulterous marriage a holy one (just as it does not transform a homosexual marriage into a holy one)
 - b. Repentance requires that one turn away from sinful conduct (e.g., adultery)
 4. Again, it may take time to fully learn and apply what Jesus taught - **2Pe 3:18**
 5. And we should be willing to work with those in difficult situations - cf. **Ga 6:1-2**
- **Souls are at stake, and we cannot water down the doctrine of Christ!**

CONCLUSION

1. From what we have gleaned these past two lessons...
 - a. God intends for marriage to be for life ("till death do us part")
 - b. It is God who joins a man and wife, and He alone can truly put asunder
 - c. He does not release the married from their marriage simply because they get a divorce
 - d. The state might recognize divorce and marriages, but they might be "unlawful" to God
 - e. Unless divorce is for the grounds of fornication, remarriage results in adultery!
 - f. Celibacy is a viable option (if need be) for those serious about the kingdom of heaven
2. When confronted with issues like divorce and remarriage...
 - a. We are tempted to take the path of least resistance
 - b. To simply conform to the standards of society
 - c. To reinterpret and reapply the words of Jesus to be socially acceptable

But we do ourselves harm and others no good by watering down what Jesus and His apostles taught. When it comes to doing and teaching the will of the Lord, may we never forget these words...

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. - 1Co 15:58

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Homosexuality

INTRODUCTION

1. Homosexuality as an acceptable, alternative lifestyle has become more prevalent...
 - a. Equal rights are being granted to practice and promote the lifestyle
 - b. There are now gay churches, even gay priests and ministers in mainstream denominations
 - c. Cities and vacation resorts often cater to open display of homosexual behavior
2. It is certainly a moral issue that confronts many Christians today...
 - a. Some question whether it is wrong
 - b. Others react in ways unbecoming a Christian

[As with any moral issue, we must look to the Word of God. And so we start by asking...]

I. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

A. IN THE PATRIARCHAL AGE...

1. Homosexuality led to the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah
 - a. The people were guilty of a “grave sin” - **Gen 18:20**
 - b. The men of the city, young and old, were involved - **Gen 19:4-5**
 - c. They are later described as “given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh” - **Jude 7**
 2. Does not Ezekiel say their sin was lack of hospitality?
 - a. So say some, based on **Eze 16:49**
 - b. Sodom in Ezekiel 16 is Ammon and Moab, the offshoots from Sodom - **JFB**
 - c. Sodom in Genesis had ceased to exist nearly 1500 years before!
- **Homosexual conduct was a grave sin in the days of the patriarchs**

B. IN THE MOSAIC AGE...

1. The Law of Moses made it a capital crime
 - a. It was an abomination, together with bestiality - **Lev 18:22-23**
 - b. It was a reason the other nations were driven out - **Lev 18:24-25**
 - c. The Israelites were warned the same could happen to them - **Lev 18:26-30**
 - d. It was a sin punishable by death - **Lev 20:13**
 2. Remember, Jesus lived under the Law of Moses
 - a. It did not end until His death on the cross - **Col 2:14**
 - b. While in force, Jesus taught strict observance of the Law - **Mt 5:17-19**
 - c. Thus Jesus approved of what the Law taught about homosexuality
- **Homosexual conduct was a capital crime under the Law of Moses**

C. IN THE CHRISTIAN AGE...

1. As written to the Christians in Rome - **Ro 1:24-27**
 - a. Lesbianism and homosexuality both described as “vile passions”
 - b. The former is “against nature”, the later is “shameful”
 - c. Men receiving in themselves the penalty of their error (e.g., AIDS?)

2. As written to the church in Corinth - **1Co 6:9-10**
 - a. Included in a list of sins preventing one from inheriting the kingdom of God
 - b. Paul uses two terms that describe homosexual conduct
 - 1) **malakos** - the passive male partner in homosexual intercourse - **Louw & Nida**
 - 2) **arsenokoites** - a male partner, possibly the active one - **ibid.**
 3. As written to the evangelist Timothy - **1Ti 1:9-11**
 - a. Paul again uses the term **arsenokoites** (men who practice homosexuality, ESV)
 - b. In a list of sins that are “contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel”
- **Homosexual conduct is contrary to the sound doctrine of the gospel of Christ**

[The Bible is clear: throughout every dispensation, homosexual conduct like other forms of sexual immorality is clearly condemned. Yet many believe that God made them homosexual. Is that true...?]

II. WHAT CAUSES HOMOSEXUALITY?

A. NATURE OR NURTURE...

1. Is homosexuality the result of one’s genetics (nature)?
 - a. Many say “God made me this way”
 - 1) There has been no definitive study proving homosexuality is genetic
 - 2) News stories often fail to mention the bias of those conducting the studies
 - b. If God gave a person reproductive organs...
 - 1) He made them physically for heterosexual relationships
 - 2) Homosexual tendencies thus imply psychological issues, not physical ones
 2. A study of identical twins proves that genetics alone do not account for gender preference
 - a. Dr. Michael Bailey of Northwestern University examined 110 pairs of identical twins who had been separated at birth and raised in different environments
 - b. He found that if one twin was gay there was a 52% chance the other was also
 - c. **Note well:** identical twins are genetically alike
 - 1) If homosexuality was genetic, they would have the same gender preference
 - 2) That 48% were not gay confirms genetics alone does not cause homosexuality
- **Nature alone does not explain homosexuality**

B. SIMPLE OR COMPLEX...

1. If homosexuality is not solely nature, is it solely nurture?
 - a. Many assume it is solely environmental (nurture)
 - b. Or that it is a simple choice of one’s behavior
 2. The evidence suggests a complex combination of factors
 - a. Some genetic factors, for example:
 - 1) A melancholy temperament is often a common factor
 - 2) In which one may be more predisposed to homosexuality
 - 3) Just as other temperaments make some more prone to anger or alcoholism
 - b. Some environmental factors, for example:
 - 1) Lack of healthy parental relationships (absent father, smother mother)
 - 2) Early exposure to improper sexual activity, especially when one is insecure about their sexual identity
 - c. The genetic and environmental factors can often be quite diverse
 - 1) Leading to various expressions of homosexuality (active, passive)
 - 2) Nor do they always lead to homosexual tendency or behavior
- **Nurture alone may not explain homosexuality**

[Sinful behavior is not always a simple choice, especially once one becomes enslaved to sin (cf. **Jn 8:34**). We who understand sin's power should certainly be sympathetic toward others. So let us ask...]

III. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE?

A. TO SHARE THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL...

1. We must be hold fast to the truth that is in Jesus - **Ep 4:20-24**
2. We must teach sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel - **1Ti 1:8-11**
-- **It may be politically incorrect, but we cannot compromise truth**

B. TO DISPLAY THE LOVE OF THE GOSPEL...

1. We have the duty to speak the truth in love - **Ep 4:15**
2. Which affects how we approach those enslaved in sin - **2Ti 2:24-26**
-- **We must hate the sin, but we must also love the sinner**

C. TO OFFER THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL...

1. Cleansing, sanctification and justification to all - **1Co 6:9-11**
2. The fruit of the Spirit to deal with the works of the flesh - **Ga 5:16-25**
-- **No matter the form of sexual immorality, the gospel provides deliverance!**

CONCLUSION

1. Homosexuality is a volatile issue today...
 - a. It is a politically charged issue
 - b. Opposition to it is often depicted as being hateful, homophobic, narrow minded
2. The challenge confronting Christians today is how to respond...
 - a. Too many are indeed hateful and homophobic
 - b. That is wrong, and increases the likelihood of persecution

We must be faithful to the Scriptures, but we must also be faithful to example of Jesus and His apostles, who reached out to all sinners with the display of love, the promise of forgiveness, and the hope of transformation...

For more resources on the subject of homosexuality, visit these websites:

Homosexuality - A Christian Perspective

<http://executableoutlines.com/hom.htm>

Christian Resources about Homosexuality and AIDS

<http://home.messiah.edu/~chase/h/>

Exodus International

<http://www.exodus-international.org/>

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Abortion

INTRODUCTION

1. A moral issue that has long confronted Christians is abortion; in 1996 there were...
 - a. 1.37 million abortions in the USA
 - b. 42 million abortions worldwide
 - **The Center For Bio-Ethical Reform**

2. Why do women have abortions...?
 - a. 1% because of rape or incest
 - b. 6% because of potential health problems for the mother or child
 - c. 93% for social reasons (i.e., the child is unwanted or inconvenient)
 - **ibid.**

3. At what gestational ages are abortions performed...?
 - a. 52% before the 9th week
 - b. 25% between the 9th and 10th week
 - c. 12% between the 11th and 12th week
 - d. 6% between the 13th and 15th week
 - e. 4% between 16th and 20th week
 - f. 1% (16,450/yr) after the 20th week (five months)
 - **ibid.**

[An estimated 43% of all women will have an abortion age 45. 47% of all abortions are performed on women who have already had a previous abortion. This behooves us to ask...]

I. WHAT IS ABORTION?

A. IN SIMPLEST TERMS...

1. Termination of a pregnancy before birth, resulting in the death of the fetus
2. **Spontaneous abortions** due to injury or disorders is called a miscarriage
3. **Induced abortions** are intentionally brought on when a pregnancy:
 - a. Is unwanted for various reasons
 - b. A risk to the mother's health
 - c. The fetus (child) is likely to have serious physical or mental health problems
- **Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy before birth**

B. IN SPECIFIC DETAILS...

1. **Drug-based abortion methods**
 - a. Combination of drugs (e.g., RU-486) which result in contractions to expel the fetus
 - b. Taken or administered during the first weeks of a confirmed pregnancy
2. **Surgical abortion methods**
 - a. Vacuum aspiration
 - 1) Used in the 6th to 14th week of pregnancy
 - 2) An electric pump is used to extract the fetus

- 3) Often followed by a scraping of the uterus
- b. Dilation and curettage (D&C)
 - 1) Used in the 6th to 16th week
 - 2) Involves dilating the cervix and scraping the uterine lining with a curette
- c. Dilation and evacuation (D&E)
 - 1) Used after the 16th week up to the 24th week
 - 2) Involves greater dilation, suction, a large curette, and forceps
- d. Induction abortion
 - 1) Also used between the 16th and 24th week
 - 2) Saltine solutions and other chemicals are used to induce labor
- e. Hysterotomy
 - 1) Used at the end of the 2nd trimester and into the 3rd trimester
 - 2) Similar to a cesarean section, the uterus is cut open and fetus is removed
- f. Intact dilation and extraction (partial birth abortion)
 - 1) Used at the end of the 2nd trimester and into the 3rd trimester
 - 2) The fetus is removed from the uterus through the birth canal, feet first
 - 3) Suction is used to remove brain and spinal fluid to collapse the skull and allow complete removal of the fetus

-- **Abortion is the gruesome termination of a living organism**

[Everyone agrees abortion is a terrible procedure. But our primary concern about abortion involves the moral issue...]

II. IS ABORTION SINFUL?

A. WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS...

1. About the unborn in the womb
 - a. They are formed by God - **Psa 139:13-14; Jer 1:5; Isa 44:2**
 - b. They are called “children” - **Gen 25:21-22; 2Ki 19:3**
 - 1) The Hebrew word is **ben**
 - 2) The same word for son - cf. **Gen 4:25**
 - c. They are called “babies” - **Lk 1:41,44**
 - 1) The Greek word is **brephos**
 - 2) The same word for newborns and older infants - cf. **Lk 2:12,16; 18:15**
2. About the death of the unborn child
 - a. Moses describes a case where a man strikes a pregnant woman, causing a premature birth - **Exo 21:22**
 - b. If there is no harm to the child, the man is only fined - **Exo 21:22**
 - c. If harm ensues, punishment is to meted proportionally: “life for life...” - **Exo 21:23-25**
 - d. **Note well:**
 - 1) The unborn fetus is just as much a human being as the mother in this passage
 - 2) Unintentional life-taking was usually not a capital offense, but here it clearly was! - cf. **Exo 21:12-13**
3. About the death of the innocent
 - a. An abomination to God - **Pr 6:17**
 - b. The opposite to judgment and righteousness - **Jer 22:3**

-- **The unborn are equal to live children; is it not a sin to kill innocent children?**

B. WHAT EARLY CHRISTIANS BELIEVED...

1. “Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born” - **Epistle of Barnabas 19 (74 AD)**
 2. “You shall not procure [an] abortion, nor destroy a newborn child” - **Didache 2:1 (150 AD)**
 3. “There are some women among you who by drinking special potions extinguish the life of the future human in their very bowels, thus committing murder before they even give birth.” - **Mark Felix, Octavius 30 (170 AD)**
 4. “In our case, a murder being once for all forbidden, we may not destroy even the fetus in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from the other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one; you have the fruit already in its seed.” - **Tertullian, Apology 9:8 (210 AD)**
 5. “Now we allow that life begins with conception because we contend that the soul also begins from conception; life taking its commencement at the same moment and place that the soul does.” - **Tertullian, Apology 27 (210 AD)**
 6. Many others equated abortion with murder, including Hippolytus (228 AD), Basil the Great (374 AD), John Chrysostom (391 AD), and Jerome (396 AD)
- **From the beginning of early church history, abortion was considered a sin**

[The Biblical and Christian view of the intentional death of the unborn has always been that it is murder. If so, then...]

III. WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE?

A. TO DEFEND THE HELPLESS...

1. We must support and uphold the weak - **Ac 20:35; 1Th 5:14**
 - a. Who is more weak than the innocent unborn child?
 - b. Who is more helpless than unborn babes unable to defend themselves?
 2. As Christians we cannot take the law into our own hands, nor can we resort to violence
 - a. But we do have “weapons mighty in God” (meekness, gentleness, truth) - **2Co 10:1-4**
 - b. By which we can “cast down arguments...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” - **2Co 10:5**
 - c. I.e., seek to lead others to a proper understanding of what is right and true
 3. As “citizen saints” living in a free society, we should also:
 - a. Pray for our leaders, that we may live peaceable, godly lives - **1Ti 2:1-4**
 - b. Elect those who respect God’s Word on such issues, for it can only “insure domestic tranquility...promote the general welfare” of one’s country - **U. S. Constitution**
 - c. Remembering that sin is a reproach to any nation - **Pr 14:34**
- **We should do whatever we can as peacemakers for Christ to protect the helpless**

B. TO HELP THE VICTIMS...

1. Both mothers and the unborn, offering viable alternatives (e.g., adoption)
 2. Especially those suffering from abuse, incest, and rape
 3. Willing to offer financial aid and counseling when needed - cf. **Ac 20:35**
 4. For women who have had abortions need forgiveness and counseling
- **As individuals and as a society, we should support alternatives to abortion and help to its victims (including those who have had abortions)**

C. RELATED CONCERNS...

1. What about women’s rights...

- a. To choose?
 - b. To privacy?
 - c. To control their own bodies?
 2. Such rights are important, but...
 - a. Does a woman have the right to physically abuse her born children?
 - b. Are mothers (or fathers) free to abuse children entrusted to their care?
 - c. If mothers cannot abuse a child after birth, then why before birth?
 3. "It's my own body!" many women say; yet that not is not quite accurate
 - a. A woman with child is not one body, but two
 - b. The woman's body is a **host** that nourishes the child
 - c. The child is a separate organism residing as **guest**
 - d. (Technically, the child is a parasite, but a benign parasite)
 - e. It would be like a father with his child in his arms, claiming he had the right to kill it
- **To kill a child in the name of private rights or personal choice is selfish!**

CONCLUSION

1. We live in a morally confused time...
 - a. We have laws that protect endangered animals, including their unborn
 - b. But many consider it wrong to enact laws to protect the human unborn!
 - c. In the name of personal choice, millions of lives are destroyed each year-- **"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil..." - Isa 5:20**
2. Our society has become like the ancient nations of old...
 - a. Who burned their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods - **Deut 12:31**
 - b. Even the nation of Israel, in its decline - **Psa 106:37-38**-- **Today, many shed innocent blood, offering their children on the idol of "pro-choice"**
3. Our moral confusion is caused by the deceitfulness of sin...
 - a. Which darkens our understanding, alienates us from God - cf. **Ep 4:17-19**
 - b. Which blinds us and makes us past feeling, leading to lewdness and greediness - **ibid.**-- **Sadly, many who would lead us politically and religiously are just as blind**

The only solution to the moral morass of our day is the truth that is in Jesus, where all sinners can find not only truth, but also renewal, righteousness, and holiness... - **Ep 4:20-24**

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Domestic Violence

INTRODUCTION

1. A serious problem in our society is **domestic violence**...
 - a. Spouse abuse between husband and wife
 - b. Child abuse between parent and child
2. Domestic abuse has many forms...
 - a. Physical violence, sexual abuse
 - b. Psychological (emotional) abuse, both aggressive and passive aggressive behavior
3. Sadly, Christians are not immune to domestic violence...
 - a. Husbands have been known to abuse their wives, and vice versa
 - b. Parents have abused their children, and vice versa

[Yet problems related to domestic violence could be eliminated if Biblical admonitions concerning family relations were followed. For example, consider what is taught concerning...]

I. RELATIONS BETWEEN HUSBANDS AND WIVES

A. THE HUSBAND'S DUTY TO HIS WIFE...

1. The husband is to love his wife - **Ep 5:25-29**
 - a. As Christ loves the church
 - b. As a man loves his own body
 2. The husband is to honor his wife - **1Pe 3:7**
 - a. Treating them with understanding
 - b. Respecting her as a fellow heir of the grace of life (a sister in Christ!)
 - c. Otherwise, your prayers will be hindered
 3. The husband is not to be bitter toward his wife - **Col 3:19**
 - a. "do not be harsh" (ESV)
 - b. "never treat them harshly" (NLT)
- **How can a faithful Christian husband physically or verbally abuse his wife?**

B. THE WIFE'S DUTY TO HER HUSBAND...

1. The wife is to love her husband - **Tit 2:4**
 2. The wife is to submit to her husband - **Ep 5:22-24; Col 3:18; 1Pe 3:1-6**
 - a. As to the Lord
 - b. As the church is subject to Christ
 - c. As is fitting in the Lord
 - d. Even if the husband is not a Christian
 3. The wife is to respect her husband - **Ep 5:33**
- **How can a faithful Christian wife physically or verbally abuse her husband?**

[Christians who respect and apply such admonitions do not have problems with domestic violence involving marital relations. The same is true for those who follow Biblical admonitions concerning...]

II. RELATIONS BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

A. THE PARENTS' DUTY TOWARD THEIR CHILDREN...

1. The mother is to love her children - **Tit 2:4**
 2. The father is not to provoke his children to wrath (anger) - **Ep 6:4**
 - a. "do not exasperate your children" (TNIV)
 - b. "by the way you treat them" (NLT)
 - c. "lest they become discouraged" - **Col 3:21**
 3. The father is to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord - **Ep 6:4**
 - a. "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (ESV)
 - b. Exemplified by Paul with his conduct among his spiritual children - **1Th 2:11**
 - c. Such discipline also includes chastening when necessary - **He 12:7-9**
 4. In the absence of a father, a mother can provide such training - **2Ti 1:5; 3:15**
- **How can Christian parents provide children anything less than true love?**

B. THE CHILDREN'S DUTY TOWARD THEIR PARENTS...

1. Children are to obey their parents - **Ep 6:1; Col 3:20**
 - a. "in the Lord" - as far as their commandments agree with those of God - **Barnes**
 - b. "for this right" - three reasons given by Barnes:
 - 1) It is so appointed by God as a duty
 - 2) Children owe a debt of gratitude to their parents for what they have done for them
 - 3) It will be for the good of the children themselves, and for the welfare of society
 - c. "this is well pleasing to the Lord" - who Himself submitted to His parents - **Lk 2:51**
 2. Children are to honor their parents - **Ep 6:2-3**
 - a. Which means to love and respect them
 - b. Which comes with a promise of a good and long life (that is generally true)
 3. Children are to support their parents - **1Ti 5:4,8,16**
 - a. Especially a mother or grandmother who is a widow
 - b. Failure to do so is a denial of the faith and to be worse than an unbeliever
 - c. A personal duty, not one to be passed on to the church
- **How can Christian children show parents anything less than loving behavior?**

CONCLUSION

1. Through such admonitions, the Bible addresses the problems of domestic violence...
 - a. Producing loving and lasting marriages
 - b. Creating peaceful and harmonious families
2. Indeed, domestic violence disappears overnight **if we simply treat one another as Christians...**
 - a. "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you." - **Ep 4:32; cf. Ep 5:1-2; 1Co 13:4-8**
 - b. "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;" - **Ro 12:10; cf. Php 2:3-4**

"Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing." - 1Pe 3:8-9

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Euthanasia

INTRODUCTION

1. A moral issue that is increasingly confronting Christians today is **euthanasia**...
 - a. The word “euthanasia” comes straight out of the Greek
 - b. “**eu**”, goodly or well + “**thanatos**”, death = the good death
 - c. For 18th-century writers in England that was what euthanasia meant, a “good” death, a welcome way to depart quietly and well from life
 -- [MedicineNet.com](http://www.MedicineNet.com)

2. Today, **euthanasia** is understood as more than simply dying a good and easy death...
 - a. It commonly refers to a doctor inducing death with a lethal injection, requested by a patient suffering terrible pain
 - b. Also called “assisted suicide”; other terms include “aid in dying”, “death with dignity”, even “mercy killing”
 - c. Not to be confused with refusing artificial life support and allowing the natural death process

3. Some forms of **voluntary euthanasia** or “assisted suicide” are legal in...
 - a. Countries such as Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Thailand
 - b. The U.S. states of Oregon and Washington
 -- [Wikipedia](http://www.Wikipedia)

[What should the Christian think concern this issue? First, let’s consider...]

I. THE ARGUMENTS REGARDING EUTHANASIA

A. ARGUMENTS FOR...

1. Choice - Proponents emphasize that choice is a fundamental principle for liberal democracies and free market systems
2. Quality of Life
 - a. The pain and suffering a person feels during a disease, even with pain relievers, can be incomprehensible to a person who has not gone through it
 - b. Even without considering the physical pain, it is often difficult for patients to overcome the emotional pain of losing their independence
3. Economic costs and human resources
 - a. Today in many countries there is a shortage of hospital space
 - b. The energy of doctors and hospital beds could be used for people whose lives could be saved instead of continuing the life of those who want to die which increases the general quality of care and shortens hospital waiting lists
 - c. It is a burden to keep people alive past the point they can contribute to society, especially if the resources used could be spent on a curable ailment
 -- **Wikipedia, ibid.**

B. ARGUMENTS AGAINST...

1. Professional

- a. Critics argue that it could unduly compromise the role of health care workers
 - b. Ministers of health and life would also become ministers of death
 - c. They would violate the Hippocratic oath: “I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan” (though it has fallen out of use since the 1970s)
 2. Moral and theological
 - a. Euthanasia is viewed as murder, and voluntary euthanasia as suicide
 - b. A violation of the sanctity of human life, that human life belongs to God
 - c. That humans should not be the ones to make the choice to end life
 3. Feasibility of implementation
 - a. To be voluntary, a patient must be mentally competent to make the decision
 - b. Competence can be difficult to determine or even define
 4. Necessity
 - a. Where there is life, there is hope: for a cure, remission, or even answer to prayer
 - b. The correct action is to attempt to bring about a cure or engage in palliative care
 5. Wishes of family
 - a. Family members often desire to spend as much time with their loved ones as possible before they die
 - b. Their wishes ought to be considered
 6. Consent under pressure
 - a. Once euthanasia becomes an acceptable health procedure, it will be subject to economic considerations
 - b. Hospital and insurance personnel will have an economic incentive to advise or pressure people toward euthanasia consent
- **Wikipedia, *ibid.***

[Such are the arguments offered by both sides of the debate. As Christians, our primary concern should be the moral and theological issues...]

II. WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS...

1. The Bible does not specifically forbid or condone euthanasia
 2. It does refer to several instances of suicide
 3. It also reveals several principles which we may apply to this issue
- **We must let the Bible aid us to “discern both good and evil” - He 5:14**

B. SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS...

1. Life comes from God, to take it is murder
 - a. As such He has the sole right to dispose of it - **Ac 17:25,28**
 - b. Human life is sacred because we are made in His image - **Gen 9:5-6**
 - c. Suicide, in general, is an act of murder which is immoral - **Exo 20:13**
2. Our bodies belong to God, not us
 - a. This is especially true of Christians - **1Co 6:19-20**
 - b. We no longer live for ourselves, but for God - **Ro 14:7-8; 2Co 5:15**
 - c. We might prefer death, but the Lord may have a different plan - **Php 1:21-24**
3. Every example of suicide in the Bible was by a sinful man
 - a. Abimelech, assisted by armor bearer - **Judg 9:50-54**
 - b. Saul, who gravely wounded fell on his own sword - **1Sa 31:3-4**
 - c. Ahithophel, who hanged himself - **2Sa 17:23**

- d. Zimri, who burned himself alive - **1Ki 16:18-19**
 - e. Judas, who hanged himself - **Mt 27:5**
 4. Men of God chose to endure pain rather than end life prematurely
 - a. Job
 - 1) Who suffered not for sin - **Job 2:7-10**
 - 2) Who longed for death, but would not kill himself - **Job 6:8-9**
 - b. Jeremiah
 - 1) Who suffered with those who had sinned - **Lam 3:38-41**
 - 2) Who could have fled to Babylon, but chose not to - **Jer 40:4**
 - c. Jesus
 - 1) Who suffered for all who sinned - **1Pe 3:18**
 - 2) Who endured the cross - **He 12:2**
 5. The early Christians saw value in suffering
 - a. For the character and hope it produced - **Ro 5:3-4**
 - b. For the maturity and patience it produced - **Ja 1:2-4**
 - c. For the opportunity to honor and glorify Christ - **1Pe 1:6-7; Php 1:20**
 6. Paul was willing to endure suffering for the benefit of others
 - a. He preferred death, but considered the needs of others - **Ph 1:21-24**
 - b. He endured suffering to demonstrate the power of Christ in him - **2Co 4:8-12**
 - c. He viewed affliction as an opportunity to provide an example - **2Co 1:6-11**
- **How we die may be our last opportunity to magnify the Lord and help others**

CONCLUSION

1. Voluntary euthanasia (suicide), even when one is suffering, can be viewed as...
 - a. An act of ingratitude toward God who gives us both life and suffering for our good
 - b. A violation of our duty to serve God all the days of our lives
 - c. A misguided effort to escape an aspect of life that God intends for us to experience
 - d. A selfish act that hurts those closest to us, depriving them of our example and influence
2. How can we hasten our death, just to avoid suffering...?
 - a. When we do not know what the future holds (a cure, remission, answer to prayer)?
 - b. When our suffering may be allowed for our benefit and those around us?

This is not to say we cannot try to alleviate suffering via pain killers short of taking a life. But our lives belong to God, and we must trust in Him and His promises...

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

- **1Co 10:13**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

- **2Co 1:3-5**

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Gambling

INTRODUCTION

1. We turn now to **gambling**, a moral issue confronting Christians due to...
 - a. The proliferation of government sanctioned gambling (e.g., state lotteries)
 - b. The easy access to gambling (e.g., lottery tickets in convenience stores)
2. What is **gambling** (or **gaming**)...?
 - a. The wagering of money or something of material value on an event with an uncertain outcome with the primary intent of winning additional money and/or material goods - [Wikipedia](#)
 - b. Typically, the outcome of the wager is evident within a short period - **ibid.**
 - c. The term gaming in this context typically refers to instances in which the activity has been specifically permitted by law - **ibid.**
3. Sadly, some religions encourage gambling...
 - a. “Both the Catholic and Jewish traditions traditionally set aside days for gambling” - **Dwayne Carpenter**, quoted in [“Gambling Had Role In Religious History”](#)
 - b. The above article mentions Christmas and Hanukkah as holidays in which gambling was permitted, if not encouraged

[If both states and some religions approve of gambling, what could be wrong with it? Before supplying some answers, let’s first address...]

I. ARGUMENTS USED TO JUSTIFY GAMBLING

A. “LIFE IS A GAMBLE...”

1. Does not Solomon say “time and chance happen to them all”? - **Ecc 9:11**
 2. So it may appear when life is viewed “under the sun” (a purely worldly perspective)
 3. But God’s will in our lives precludes a life of pure chance - **1Co 4:19; Jm 4:15**
- **Life is not gambling, it involves the will of God!**

B. “FARMING IS A GAMBLE...”

1. Does not the farmer take a risk in sowing when he may not reap?
 2. But God has promised “seedtime and harvest would not cease” - **Gen 8:22**
 3. Farming is an honorable way of receiving God’s blessings - **Psa 104:14**
- **Farming is not gambling, it involves the activity of God!**

C. “BUYING INSURANCE IS A GAMBLE...”

1. Is not buying insurance a gamble?
 2. Insurance is simply a method of shifting risk (accidents, illness) from one party to another
 3. It is also a way of providing for one’s family, an important duty - **1Ti 5:8**
- **Insurance is not gambling, when used to shift risk and provide for others**

D. “INVESTING IS A GAMBLE...”

1. Is not investing in business or the stock market a gamble?

2. It can be, when involving speculative or significant risks
3. But good and safe investments are not evil within themselves - cf. **Mt 25:14-30**
- **Investing is not gambling, when done prudently**

[Arguments in favor of gambling are weak attempts to defend the indefensible. Compare them with...]

II. ARGUMENTS AGAINST GAMBLING

A. THE PRINCIPLE IS SINFUL...

1. Gambling violates the work ethic - **Ep 4:28; 1Th 4:11-12**
 - a. To gain from honorable labor
 - b. Not get rich quick schemes
2. Gambling violates the stewardship ethic - **1Chr 29:13-14; 1Pe 4:10**
 - a. All things come from God
 - b. We will have to give an account for our stewardship
- **People gamble for a quick buck, willing to risk what is not theirs**

B. THE MOTIVATION IS SINFUL...

1. People gamble because of greed - **1Ti 6:9-10**
 - a. Their desire to be rich, which leads to foolish and harmful lusts, destruction and perdition
 - b. Their love of money, which leads to loss of faith and many sorrows
2. People gamble because of covetousness - **Ep 5:3-7; Col 3:5-6**
 - a. They want something more than God, making it idolatry
 - b. They will bring the wrath of God upon themselves
- **People gamble because they want to be rich, a desire we should flee (1Ti 6:11)**

C. THE FRUIT IS SINFUL...

1. It takes advantage of others' weaknesses - cf. **Ro 15:1-2**
 - a. Exploiting others or extorting money for one's own advantage
 - b. Do gamblers care what happens to those who lose?
2. It leads to unsavory companions - cf. **1Co 15:33; Ep 5:11**
 - a. Others who are motivated by greed and covetousness
 - b. Those quick to take advantage: bookies, loan sharks, etc.
3. It leads to addiction - cf. **2Pe 2:19**
 - a. Gambling can become psychologically and physically addictive
 - b. "Monetary reward in a gambling-like experiment produces brain activation very similar to that observed in a cocaine addict receiving an infusion of cocaine." - **Hans Breiter, MD**, co-director of the Motivation and Emotion Neuroscience Centre at Massachusetts General Hospital
4. It leads to other sins - cf. **Mk 7:21-23**
 - a. As debts build up, people turn to other quick sources of money (theft, drugs)
 - b. Suicide is common, along with abuse, divorce, other mental disorders
- **People who gamble do not consider how they hurt themselves and others**

CONCLUSION

1. Which is gambling more like...?
 - a. The works of the flesh, or the fruit of the Spirit? - **Ga 5:19-23**
 - b. The deeds of the old man, or the apparel of the new man? - **Col 3:5-14**

2. One does not need to look long to see that gambling is sinful...
 - a. The motive is greed
 - b. The desire is to get rich quick (covetousness)
 - c. The harm to self and others is extensive

3. Consider these tidbits of wisdom...
 - a. Gambling: The sure way of getting nothing from something - **Wilson Mizner**
 - b. The safest way to double your money is to fold it over once and put it in your pocket - **Kin Hubbard**
 - c. By gaming we lose both our time and treasure - two things most precious to the life of man - **Owen Felltham**
 - d. Lottery: A tax on people who are bad at math - **Author Unknown**

Only those blinded by the deceitfulness of sin have problems seeing the problems with gambling...

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ...”

- Ep 4:17-20

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Alcohol

INTRODUCTION

1. A serious moral issue confronting Christians today involves the consumption of **alcohol**...
 - a. More than 30% of Americans at some time in their lives has had an alcohol use disorder - **Bridget Gant**, National Institute On Alcohol Abuse And Alcoholism
 - b. Nearly 100,000 people die every year of alcohol-related causes - **Dr. James C. Garbutt**, medical director of the Alcohol and Substance Abuse Program (UNC at Chapel Hill)
 - c. Alcohol is more dangerous than some illegal drugs like marijuana or Ecstasy and should be classified as such in legal systems - **Professor David Nutt**, Bristol University
 - d. Alcohol is blamed for more than half of all visits to hospital emergency rooms - **ibid.**
2. The Bible clearly warns against the dangers of alcohol...
 - a. Whether in the form of wine or strong drink
 - b. With the potential of leading one astray - **Pro 20:1**

[What further wisdom can be gleaned from just the book of Proverbs alone concerning alcohol...?]

I. ALCOHOL IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

A. ALCOHOL LEADS TO POVERTY...

1. A warning against those who love wine - **Pro 21:17**
2. A warning against spending time with winebibbers and drunkards - **Pro 23:20-21**
-- **Alcohol has been the downfall of many businessmen**

B. ALCOHOL DESTROYS LIVES...

1. Leads to woe and sorrow, contentions and complaints, wounds without cause and redness of eyes - **Pro 23:29-30**
2. Seductive, destroying one just like the seductress - **Pro 23:31-32; 5:3-5; 6:24-26**
3. Alter your senses, leading you to say things you'll regret (e.g., "office parties") - **Pro 23:33**
4. Gives a false sense of security, exposing you to great danger (e.g., "driving drunk") - **Pro 23:34-35**
-- **Alcohol has destroyed many lives, both those who drink and innocent ones who cross their paths**

C. ALCOHOL IMPAIRS JUDGMENT...

1. Which is why kings and princes were to abstain - **Pro 31:4-5**
2. It is better reserved for the dying and devastated - **Pro 31:6-7**
-- **Alcohol is not for those who would be wise**

[Indeed, "Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler, And whoever is led astray by it is not wise." (**Pro 20:1**). Because of such warnings, and with the serious problems with alcohol in our society, let's review what is said about...]

II. ALCOHOL IN THE LIVES OF CHRISTIANS

A. WHAT IS CONDEMNED...

1. **Drunkenness**
 - a. A work of darkness, not an element of the armor of light - **Ro 13:11-14**
 - b. Which will keep one out of the kingdom of God - **1Co 6:9-10; Ga 5:19-21**
 - c. Conduct suitable for church discipline - **1Co 5:11-13**
 2. **Social drinking**
 - a. We are to dedicate ourselves to doing the will of God, not the lusts of men - **1Pe 4:1-2**
 - b. Thus we are to abstain from drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties - **1Pe 4:3**
 - c. Though we should expect others to think ill of us for abstaining - **1Pe 4:4**
- **The popular use of alcohol has no place in the life of the Christian**

B. WHAT IS COMMANDED...

1. **Concern for the weaknesses of others**
 - a. Are we willing to destroy the one for whom Christ died? - **Ro 14:14-15**
 - b. Are we more interested in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit? - **Ro 14:16-18**
 2. **Willingness to forego wine if a stumbling block to others**
 - a. Do we know someone who struggles with alcohol abuse and addiction? - **Ro 14:19-20**
 - b. Do we love them more than any presumed right we may have to drink? - **Ro 14:21**
 3. **Evidently Timothy had chosen to forego wine for such reasons**
 - a. Paul prescribed that Timothy drink wine for medicinal purposes - **1Ti 5:23**
 - b. Wine was often used to purify water, yet for some reason Timothy had abstained
- **The Christian must prayerfully consider the role of influence regarding alcohol**

CONCLUSION

1. What is God's will regarding the consumption of alcohol...?
 - a. **In view of the warnings found in Proverbs?**
 - 1) It can lead to poverty
 - 2) It can destroy lives
 - 3) It impairs judgment
 - b. **In view of the teachings found in the New Testament?**
 - 1) Prohibitions concerning drunkenness
 - 2) Concerns regarding influence on weaker brethren
2. What is God's will in light of the problems of alcohol abuse in our society today...?
 - a. **Shall we flirt with the seducing effects of alcohol?**
 - 1) Alcohol can be tempting and easily ensnare the unsuspecting
 - 2) If one in three have succumbed, might not we?
 - b. **Shall we be insensitive to the weaknesses that many have regarding alcohol?**
 - 1) Alcohol is the number one drug problem we face today
 - 2) If one in three have problems with it, dare we become stumbling blocks to them?

It shouldn't take the wisdom of Solomon to see that Christians should take the dangers of alcohol seriously and be proactive in helping themselves and others to remain free from its clutches...!

It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. - Ro 14:21

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Tobacco

INTRODUCTION

1. Another moral issue confronting Christians is the consumption of **tobacco**...
 - a. In the form of smoking(cigarettes, cigars, pipes)
 - b. Also smokeless tobacco (chew, snuff)
2. In the past, the dangers of tobacco may have not been known...
 - a. Prompting many (including Christians) to consider a harmless habit
 - b. Even today some take it lightly

[But the evidence for the harmful effects of tobacco is now overwhelming...]

I. STATISTICS ON TOBACCO

A. OVERALL MORTALITY...

1. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States
 2. Cigarette smoking causes an estimated 438,000 deaths, about 1 of every 5 deaths, each year
 3. More deaths are caused each year by tobacco use than by all deaths from human HIV, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides, and murders combined
 4. On average, adults who smoke cigarettes die 14 years earlier than nonsmokers
- **Centers For Disease Control Prevention (updated September 2006)**

B. MORTALITY FROM SPECIFIC DISEASES...

1. Lung cancer: 123,800 deaths; other cancers: 34,700 deaths
 2. Chronic lung disease: 90,600 deaths; coronary heart disease: 86,800 deaths
 3. Stroke: 17,400 deaths; other diagnoses: 84,600 deaths
- **These figures are per year - Ibid.**

C. EFFECTS OF SECOND HAND SMOKE...

1. Secondhand smoke exposure causes heart disease and lung cancer in nonsmoking adults
 2. It causes approximately 3,400 lung cancer deaths and 22,700–69,600 heart disease deaths annually among adult nonsmokers in the United States
 3. It causes respiratory symptoms in children and slows their lung growth
 4. It causes sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and more frequent and severe asthma attacks in children
 5. Almost 60% of U.S. children aged 3–11 years—or almost 22 million children—are exposed to secondhand smoke
 6. There is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure - Even brief exposure can be dangerous
- **Ibid.**

D. OTHER FORMS OF TOBACCO USE...

1. Pipe smoking and cigar smoking increase the risk of dying from cancers of the lung, esophagus, larynx, and oral cavity

2. Smokeless tobacco contains 28 cancer-causing agents (carcinogens)
 3. Smokeless tobacco use increases the risk for developing oral cancer
 4. Adolescents who use smokeless tobacco are more likely to become cigarette smokers
- **Ibid.**

[In view of such evidence of the harmful effects of tobacco use, there are very good reasons...]

II. WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD ABSTAIN

A. THE EFFECT ON OUR BODIES...

1. Remember what the Bible teaches
 - a. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit - **1Co 6:19**
 - b. Our bodies have been bought, and are not our own - **1Co 6:19-20**
 - c. Our bodies are to glorify God - **1Co 6:20**
 - d. Our bodies are instruments by which we serve God - **Ro 12:1-2; 6:13,19**
 2. Thus our bodies are a reflection of our stewardship
 - a. We are all stewards of God's manifold grace - **1Pe 4:10**
 - b. Our duty is to be faithful in what has been given us - **1Co 4:2**
 - c. We shall be judged by how we used what has been given us - **Lk 16:10-12**
 - d. What if someone borrowed what is yours and misused it (e.g., your car)?
- **Years cut short by tobacco are lost opportunities to serve and glorify God**

B. THE EFFECT ON OTHERS...

1. Hurting, even killing them through second-hand smoke
 2. Burdening family financially with hospital bills left behind
 3. Depriving family of your presence as spouse, parent, grand-parent
 4. Impoverishing the church and society of our talents and service
- **Is slowly killing yourself and harming others showing love, or selfishness?**

C. THE EFFECT ON OUR INFLUENCE...

1. We are role models, for our faith is spoken of by others - cf. **Ro 1:8; 16:19**
 2. We influence others for good or ill
 3. Can we say what Paul did about following one's example? - cf. **Php 3:17**
 4. Do we consider the effect it has on saving others? - cf. **1Co 10:31-33**
- **Does tobacco help or hinder our efforts to share Christ with others?**

CONCLUSION

1. The harmful effects of tobacco have been clearly established...
 - a. The scientific evidence is overwhelming
 - b. Even our bodies tell us by the way they react to smoke
2. Christians have ample reason to abstain...
 - a. For health reasons
 - b. For spiritual reasons

For those addicted to nicotine, stopping may not be easy. But I trust we have seen that one should make every effort to rid themselves of this habit that can destroy both body and soul...

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Dancing

INTRODUCTION

1. A moral issue that often confronts Christians today is **dancing**...
 - a. Especially in its modern and popular forms
 - b. Involving unmarried couples
2. Increasingly popular is what is called “dirty dancing”...
 - a. Sexualized dancing, also known as freak dancing or grinding
 - b. Overly suggestive grinding, rubbing and groping between dance partners
 - c. Prompting some public schools to adopt policies against it
3. But is “dirty dancing” the only kind of dance that is wrong? In this lesson, I wish to...
 - a. Explain why dancing in general is unbecoming of those who call themselves Christians
 - b. Address commonly raised objections by those who seek to approve of dancing

[Our study begins with a close look at...]

I. THE SIN OF LEWDNESS

A. LEWDNESS CONDEMNED...

1. As a work of the flesh - **Ga 5:19** (NKJV)
 - a. Translated “lasciviousness” in the KJV, ASV
 - b. Translated “sensuality” in the ESV, NASB
 - c. Translated “debauchery” in the NIV
 - d. Translated “licentiousness” in the NRSV
2. As that which defiles a man - **Mk 7:21-23** (NKJV)

B. LEWDNESS DEFINED...

1. The Greek word is **aselgia**, defined by **Thayer** as “unbridled lust...wanton acts or manners: filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females”
2. Anything which excites the lust of the flesh (words, bodily movements, unchaste handling) is therefore sinful
3. Of course, this applies to the stirring up of sexual desires outside the bond of marriage
 - a. The Bible allows sexual expression, but for those who are married - cf. **He 13:4**
 - b. The excitement of lust between those not married is sinful - **Mt 5:28**
 - 1) It is wrong to lust for another person
 - 2) It must therefore be wrong to arouse lust in another person

[Having defined the sin of lewdness, one must now ask: “**Does popular dancing arouse the lusts of the flesh, and therefore qualify as lewdness?**” My reply would be yes...]

II. THE SIN OF DANCING

A. NON-CHRISTIANS RECOGNIZE DANCING AS LUSTFUL...

1. “The popular teen-age dances of the mid 20th century have no set steps; the dancers respond spontaneously to the beat of the musicians. The degree of satisfaction attained by young people ‘twisting’ or ‘shaking’ to the blare of amplified music in dance halls, further enlivened by psychedelic lighting, is different from the pleasure derived by their elders waltzing to the ‘Blue Danube’ - but it is only a difference of age and time. Fundamentally, both age groups are enjoying the pleasure of dancing in their own way...The end product is doubtless the same - physical pleasure in the activity of dancing and sexual awareness of a partner, whether embraced or half-consciously observed.” - **Encyclopedia Britannica**, “The Art Of Dance”, Vol. 5, p. 455-456 (1979 edition)
2. “...The social dance has usually been the result of joint physical exuberance and sex stimuli...” - **Collier’s Encyclopedia**, “Dance”, Vol. 7, p. 683 (1964 edition)
3. “Another motive for the dance is the sexual motive - the dance has always been used as a means of expressing sexual desire and as a means of wooing...We find this same sex motive in the modern ballroom dance, which has now degenerated into dull and stupid forms, but it is a legitimate opportunity for contact.” - **Dance We Must** (1938, reprinted 1950), p. 6 (from a series of lectures given by Ted Shawn at George Peabody College For Teachers)
4. “All ballroom dancing in pairs looks toward intercourse. In this respect the Puritans were dead right....The development of no-contact dances has come about because one doesn’t now need a social excuse to embrace a girl, but as an excitant it need not involve contact at all - in fact, dances like flamenco or the twist are far more erotic than a clinch because you aren’t too close to see one another. At its best this sort of dance is simply intercourse by remote control.” - **The Joy Of Sex**, Alex Comfort, p. 162 (1972)
5. The Roman orator **Cicero** says: “No man who is sober dances, unless he is out of his mind, either when alone or in any decent society, for dancing is the companion of wanton conviviality, dissoluteness, and luxury.” - **New Unger’s Bible Dictionary** (1988)

B. COMMON SENSE TELLS US THAT DANCING IS LUSTFUL...

1. What would be your reaction if you saw an entire dance floor with people of the same sex dancing together?
 - a. If dancing was morally neutral, with no sexual overtones, there would be no reaction
 - b. But most would be shocked, suspecting they had stumbled into a “gay” dance
2. Listen to what is simply common sense:
 - a. If we would expect such a dance to be an expression of “gay” sensuality...
 - b. ...how can we deny that people of opposite sex dancing together is an expression of heterosexual activity?

[Both common sense and the testimony of people in the world confirm that dancing is an activity which has the arousal of sexual desires as its main appeal. Should Christians be making provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts? Not according to **Ro 13:14**. But almost invariably, those who desire to dance or allow their children to dance raise objections...]

III. COMMONLY RAISED OBJECTIONS

A. “DANCING MAY TURN ON OTHER PEOPLE, BUT I DON’T REACT THAT WAY...”

1. For the sake of argument, let’s assume that some people either:
 - a. Do not have strong sexual urges
 - b. Have grown spiritually(?) to the point they can keep their urges under control
2. The dancing under consideration involves two persons
 - a. Even if one is not so affected, the other may be!

- b. In which case, the “spiritual” person becomes a stumbling block to the other person, an instrument for the other person’s indulgence in fleshly lusts

B. “I CAN’T CONTROL WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK...”

1. We can’t force a person to think right, but that is no reason to tempt them to think wrong!
2. We have a responsibility not to contribute to one’s moral delinquency
 - a. We must not be a stumbling block - **Ro 14:13,21; 1Co 8:13; 10:31-32**
 - b. Otherwise we fall into grave condemnation - **Mt 18:6-7**

C. “HOW CAN ANYTHING WRONG GO ON...IT IS TIGHTLY SUPERVISED...?”

1. Bodily actions may be well-supervised, but no one can supervise the inward thoughts
2. Chaperons can inhibit only what happens on the dance floor...
 - a. What about afterwards...on the way home?
 - b. When there is no one to restrain expressing the desires that were aroused during the dance?
3. **Ann Landers:** “When you turn a guy on, he can be awfully hard to turn off.”

D. “DANCING IS GOOD EXERCISE...”

1. There are alternative forms of exercise that do not excite the lusts of the flesh
2. Are you willing to become a stumbling block to others, just so you can get some exercise?
3. Isn’t that rather selfish?

E. “DANCING IS MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE...”

1. There are four categories of dancing mentioned in the Bible
 - a. Religious dances of the Old Testament - **Exo 15:20-21; 2Sa 6:14**
 - b. Expressions of great rejoicing - **1Sa 18:6**
 - c. The play of children - **Job 21:11; Lk 7:32**
 - d. Passionate dances, like that of Salome, before King Herod - **Mt 14:6**
2. Do the first three categories justify Christians engaging in the modern dance today?
 - a. No, for these are nothing like what is being discussed in this lesson
 - b. There is no trace in the Bible that men and women danced as couples
 - 1) “While the mode of dancing is not known in detail, it is clear that men and women did not generally dance together, and there is no real evidence that they ever did. Social amusement was hardly a major purpose of dancing, and the modern method of dancing by couples is unknown.” - **Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia Of The Bible**, “Dancing”, Vol. 2, p. 12 (1977)
 - 2) “Social dancing, as we now understand it, was almost, if not altogether, unknown in ancient times...” - **Hastings Bible Dictionary**, p. 550
 - 3) “Women seemed generally to have danced by themselves...Of the social dancing of couples in the modern fashion there is no trace.” - **International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**, “Games”, p. 1170
 - c. In fact, dancing in the form of mixed couples did not exist before the 12th Century A.D. - “There is no evidence of couples dancing together, however; that was to happen much later, probably in Provence in the 12th Century.” - **Encyclopedia Britannica**, “The Art Of Dance”, Vol. 5, p. 452 (1979)
3. The only thing close to the modern dance today that is mentioned in the Bible is the dance of Herodias’ daughter, Salome (and look what happened!)

CONCLUSION

1. Shall we dance? There are two things we can be sure of...
 - a. It is wrong to lust in our hearts after others - **Mt 5:28**
 - b. It is wrong to conduct ourselves in any way as to excite the lusts in others; that is lewdness, which is condemned as a work of the flesh - **Ga 5:19-21**
2. That popular dancing involving unmarried couples is condemned, can only be denied...
 - a. By those ignorant of the Scriptures
 - b. By those hardened by the deceitfulness of sin
3. Again, let me read what others have said:

“Because of its physical appeal, dance lends itself to erotic purposes and has been practiced to these ends by both sexes.” - **Encyclopedia Britannica**, “The Art Of Dance”

Let us also remember the words of Paul:

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

- Ro 13:12-14

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Immodest Apparel

INTRODUCTION

1. A moral issue confronting Christians every day pertains to **immodest apparel**...
 - a. Should Christian women wear shorts, miniskirts, low-cut blouses, tight skirts or pants?
 - b. What about Christian men? Should they be concerned about modest apparel?
 - c. What effect might this have on certain activities, such as swimming and other athletic sports?
2. The challenge is what constitutes modesty constantly changes...
 - a. At one time, it was immodest for a woman to expose her ankles
 - b. Today, even the most modest of dress would have been considered scandalous

[I do not propose some easy answer, or simple guideline (such as “no higher than an inch above the knee”). Rather I encourage prayerful consideration of what the Bible has to say, which provides basic principles that can help one discern between good and evil. For example...]

I. IT IS SHAMEFUL TO EXPOSE ONE’S NAKEDNESS

A. CONSIDER THE EXAMPLE OF ADAM AND EVE...

1. After they sinned, they made “coverings” for themselves - **Gen 3:7-10**
 - a. Hebrew, “**chagorah**”, meaning a garment which covers the midsection
 - b. Despite such coverings, they still felt naked!
2. The Lord made “tunics” for them - **Gen 3:21**
 - a. Hebrew, “**kethoneth**”, a garment commonly reaching to knee
 - b. Evidently God was not pleased with the brevity of the coverings they had made

B. IT IS SHAMEFUL TO EXPOSE PRIVATE BODY PARTS...

1. Exposure of such parts was often a form of judgment intended to shame the wicked - cf. **Isa 3:16-17; 47:1-3**
2. Paul alludes to the fact that some parts are “unpresentable” and should be covered - **1Co 12:23-24**

[At some point there needs to be a line where it is a shame to cross, there are parts of the body that should remain private. Perhaps we determine what these may be as we consider another principle...]

II. WE MUST NOT PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FLESHLY LUSTS

A. THIS IS CLEARLY CONDEMNED IN THE SCRIPTURES...

1. Look at **Ro 13:13-14**
2. Can the way we dress excite fleshly lusts? Consider the following:
 - a. “An astonishingly great number of men are of the opinion that women are more attractive partly dressed - than nude. They prefer to see women partially disrobed to the sight of complete nakedness.” - **Theodor Reik** (Of Love And Lust)
 - b. “Mini-clothes are symbolic of those girls who want to seduce a man...” - **Mary Quant**, London fashion designer and mother of the miniskirt

- c. When asked where it (miniskirts, etc.) was all leading to, Mary Quant replied with one word: “Sex.”
 - d. During the hijacking of the Santa Maria in 1967, the women on board were concerned the rebels might have designs on them, so they left off wearing “enticing clothing”; i.e., they stopped appearing in shorts and halter-tops, and quit swimming in the ship’s pool
3. If the women of the world know what is capable of stimulating the lust of the flesh, why not the daughters of God?

B. JESUS WARNED ABOUT COMMITTING ADULTERY IN THE HEART...

1. Is there not a twofold responsibility here? - **Mt 5:27-30**
 - a. The man is responsible to guard his mind from impurity - **Php 4:8**
 - b. Is not the woman to help prevent the lewd stare?
2. Though lust is inexcusable on the man’s part, if the woman by her apparel or conduct has encouraged it, she shares in the guilt! - e.g., **Pro 7:6-27**

[If the clothing we wear encourages the arousal of fleshly lusts in others, then we have clearly crossed the line. Of course, this requires honesty and objectivity on our part; we must be willing to true to ourselves and to God. To help us toward that end, consider another basic principle from God’s Word...]

III. CLOTHING MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH GODLINESS

A. AS TAUGHT BY PAUL... - 1Ti 2:9-10

1. **“modest” (kosmio)**
 - a. “Orderly, well arranged, decent, modest” (akin to kosmos, in its primary sense as “harmonious arrangement adornment”; cf. kosmos, of the world, which is elated to kosmos in its secondary sense as the world) - **Vine’s**
 - b. “The well-ordering is not of dress and demeanor only, but of the inner life, uttering in deed and expressing itself in the outward conversation” - **Trench**
 - c. In the context, this word applies not so much to brevity of clothing, but to gaudiness of clothing
2. **“propriety” (aidos)**
 - a. Translated “shamefacedness” in the KJV
 - b. “a sense of shame, modesty, is used regarding the demeanor of women in the church” - **Vine’s**
 - c. This word applies more to the issue of brevity of clothing: Can it be said that those who display their bodies so as to excite lust in others have the quality of “shamefacedness”?
3. **“moderation” (sophrosune)**
 - a. Translated “sobriety” in the KJV
 - b. “denotes soundness of mind” - **Vine’s**
 - c. “it is that habitual inner self-government, with its constant rein on all the passions and desires, which would hinder the temptation to these from arising...” - **Trench**
 - d. Will not a sound mind take into consideration the affect one’s apparel has on another?
4. **“not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing”**
 - a. Excess, rather than actual adornment, is what is being condemned here - cf. **Isa 3:16-26** with **Ezek 16:10-14**
 - b. This is an example of the comparative use of “not” found frequently in the Bible - e.g., **Jn 6:27; 1Co 1:17; 1Jn 4:10**
 - c. Outward adornment is not wrong absolutely, but in comparison to the adorning of the inner person by good works, it is to be of lower priority and lesser importance

5. **“proper for women professing godliness”**
 - a. That which is fitting, seemly, suitable, becoming - cf. **Ep 5:3; Tit 2:1**
 - b. For women claiming to be reverent, pious - cf. **Tit 2:3-5**
 - c. Would a woman (or man) who professes to be godly knowingly adorn herself in a way that excites lust in another person?

B. AS TAUGHT BY PETER... - 1Pe 3:1-6

1. Note first the potential value of chaste conduct - **1Pe 3:1-2**
 - a. Good behavior can influence one for good
 - b. Likewise, improper behavior (e.g., immodest clothing) can have an adverse effect!
2. Peter also uses the comparative use of “not” - **1Pe 3:3-4**
 - a. The emphasis should not be one’s adornment (arranging the hair, wearing gold, putting on apparel)
 - b. Rather, it should be adorning one’s inner person
3. The adornment that greatly pleases God - **1Pe 3:4-6**
 - a. The incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit
 - b. As worn by women like Sarah, who trusted God and submitted to her husband
4. When a person disregards the effect their apparel may have on another, can it be said they are adorned with a gentle and quiet spirit?

CONCLUSION

1. It has not been my goal to establish **specific rules** for what is modest apparel...
 - a. To do so would be to do what the Bible itself does not do
 - b. Rather, to offer the general principles that can help the Christian who desires to please God rather than self or man
2. When faced with the issue of immodest apparel, may I suggest the following...
 - a. Prayerfully consider whether your adornment in any circumstance reflects your profession of godliness, and the principles found in God’s word
 - b. Seek counsel from those who are mature in the faith, whose senses have been exercised to discern good and evil - cf. **He 5:14**

Do this, and one is more likely to fulfill that goal set for us by the apostle Paul, that we be...

“...blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Ph 2:15)

Moral Issues Confronting Christians

Dishonesty

INTRODUCTION

1. A survey of 29,760 students in USA high schools revealed the following about **stealing**...
 - a. 30% admitted stealing from a store within the past year
 - b. 23% said they stole something from a parent or relative
 - c. 20% confessed they stole something from a friend
 -- **Josephson Institute's 2008 Report Card on the Ethics of American Youth**

2. In the same survey addressed the subject of **lying**...
 - a. 42% said they sometimes lie to save money
 - b. 83% confessed they lied to a parent about something significant
 -- **ibid.**

3. Again, the survey revealed the following about **cheating**...
 - a. 64% cheated on a test during the past year
 - b. 38% cheated two or more times
 -- **ibid.**

4. Amazingly, these same students have a high self-image when it comes to ethics...
 - a. 93% said they were satisfied with their personal ethics and character
 - b. 77% said that when it comes to doing what is right, they are better than most people they know
 -- **ibid.**

[Such **dishonesty** is a problem confronting our society, and certainly not just young people (e.g., elected officials, employers and employees, etc.) and likely affects many Christians as well. So let's consider...]

I. THE PROBLEM WITH DISHONESTY

A. IN GENERAL...

1. Condemned by God's Word
 - a. In the Law of Moses - **Lev 19:11; Pro 6:17-19; 11:1; 12:22**
 - b. Liars will have their place in the lake of fire - **Re 21:8**
2. Common wisdom tells us that "honesty is the best policy"
 - a. False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil - **Socrates**
 - b. The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousand fold - **Aristotle**
 - c. Honesty is the first chapter of the book of wisdom - **Thomas Jefferson**
 - d. No man has a good enough memory to make a successful liar - **Abraham Lincoln**

B. IN PARTICULAR...

1. Destroys reputations
 - a. Once you are caught lying, stealing, or cheating, you will rarely be trusted again
 - b. Even if you do it for someone, with someone - you prove yourself untrustworthy
 - c. With lies you may get ahead in the world, but you can never go back - **Russian Proverb**
2. Demolishes families, friendships

- a. Relationships depend on trusting one another
- b. If you marry a man who cheats on his wife, you'll be married to a man who cheats on his wife - **Ann Landers**
- c. Even if we lie **for** one another, we are undermining that trust
- d. Who lies for you will lie against you - **Bosnian Proverb**
- 3. Disrupts workplaces
 - a. Some believe that lying, cheating, stealing is necessary to conduct business
 - b. If I am willing to lie **for** you, how do you know I won't lie **to** you (the same for cheating and stealing)?
 - c. Once a company implements a policy of dishonesty to customers, employees will employ it against employers whenever convenient

[The problem of dishonesty in the form of lying, cheating, and stealing is really self-evident. Only those blinded by **pride** and **greed** can deny the harmful effects of dishonesty. In God's Word we find...]

II. THE SOLUTION FOR DISHONESTY

A. PUT AWAY LYING, STEALING...

- 1. We are to "put on the new man...in true holiness and righteousness" - **Ep 4:24**
- 2. Which involves "putting away lying" - **Ep 4:25**; cf. **Col 3:9**
- 3. Which includes no longer stealing, pilfering, etc. - **Ep 4:28**; **Tit 2:10**

B. SPEAK THE TRUTH...

- 1. "let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor" - **Ep 4:25**
- 2. "let your 'yes' be 'yes,' and your 'no,' 'no,'..." - **Mt 5:37**

C. LOVE ALL MEN...

- 1. One does not lie, steal, or cheat those they love
- 2. We are to love one another - **Ro 13:8**
- 3. We are to love our enemies - **Mt 5:44-45**

D. PURSUE WHAT IS GOOD...

- 1. Both for ourselves and for all - **1Th 5:15**
- 2. Whatever we want others to do to us - **Mt 7:12**

CONCLUSION

- 1. How much better, more pleasant, would life be...
 - a. If everyone lived honest lives
 - b. Not lying, stealing, and cheating
 - c. Following the principles taught by Jesus and His apostles
- 2. Indeed, the same could be said concerning all the moral issues we have examined...
 - a. The truth for moral issues is in Jesus - **Ep 4:21**
 - b. For Jesus is the light of the world - **Jn 8:12**
 - b. Those who walk as children of light bear the fruit of goodness, righteousness, truth - **Ep 5:8-9**

Follow Jesus, and we will have the light of life and truth, guiding us through the maze of moral issues that confront us daily...!