

Authority, Biblical Sexuality and Ordination Standards

by Carol Shanholtzer

In 1997 our denomination amended the *Book of Order* by adding section G-6.0106b, which includes "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness" as a requirement for all church officers (Deacons, Elders and Ministers of the Word and Sacrament). The wording added in that section did not represent a change in our denomination's beliefs or standards related to sexuality, but instead was added to make explicit in the *Book of Order* what had already been the understanding of the Christian Church from its beginning, had been approved as our denomination's standard by previous General Assemblies and had already been the basis for rulings by the General Assembly Permanent Judicial Commission (GAPJC). (1)

After the addition of that section to the *Book of Order*, attempts have been made at each subsequent General Assembly to have that wording and those ordination requirements removed. However, the manner in which we live our lives, including our sexuality, is a central concern of Christian faith. The basis for our current standards--that the marriage of a man and a woman is the only relationship in which sexual expression is moral--is unambiguously taught in Scripture and the Confessions. The Church has a clear responsibility to obey and to teach what God has revealed to us.

Our source of authority

As Presbyterians, our focus is on knowing and obeying God's will. When Jesus walked on earth as God incarnate, he could speak face to face with the people he encountered. Now, after his death and resurrection, he speaks to us through Scripture. God gives believers the Holy Spirit, not to provide new revelations that contradict Scripture, but rather to illumine our minds to understand Scripture. Presbyterians embrace the central Reformation principle "*sola scriptura*" ("Scripture alone"), which means we look to Scripture as our sole authority:

In its confessions, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) identifies with the affirmations of the Protestant Reformation. The focus of these affirmations is the rediscovery of God's grace in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures. The Protestant watchwords—grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone—embody principles of understanding which continue to guide and motivate the people of God in the life of faith. (G-2.0400)

The confessions in Part I of our denomination's constitution, the *Book of Confessions*, uniformly teach that Scripture alone is our authority and is to be obeyed:

The Westminster Confession: The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either **expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit**, or traditions of men. . . The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the **Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture**. . . . God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it **free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his Word**, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. . . (6.006, 6.010, 6.109)

The Scots Confession: When controversy arises about the right understanding of any passage or sentence of Scripture, or for the reformation of any abuse within the Kirk [Church] of God, we ought not so much to ask what men have said or done before us, as **what the Holy Ghost**

uniformly speaks within the body of the Scriptures and what Christ Jesus himself did and commanded. For it is agreed by all that **the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of unity, cannot contradict himself.** So **if the interpretation** or opinion of any theologian, Kirk, or council, **is contrary to the plain Word of God written in any other passage of the Scripture, it is most certain that this is not the true understanding and meaning of the Holy Ghost,** although councils, realms, and nations have approved and received it. . . As we believe and confess the Scriptures of God sufficient to instruct and make perfect the man of God, so do we affirm and avow their **authority to be from God, and not to depend on men** or angels. . . So far then as the council confirms its decrees by the plain Word of God, so far do we reverence and embrace them. **But if men, under the name of a council, pretend to forge for us new articles of faith, or to make decisions contrary to the Word of God, then we must utterly deny them as the doctrine of devils,** drawing our souls from the voice of the one God to follow the doctrines and teachings of men. (3.18-3.20)

The Second Helvetic Confession: We believe and confess the canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles of **both Testaments to be the true Word of God, and to have sufficient authority of themselves, not of men.** For God himself spoke to the fathers, prophets, apostles, and still speaks to us through the Holy Scriptures. And in this Holy Scripture, the universal Church of Christ has the most complete exposition of all that pertains to a saving faith, and also to the framing of a life acceptable to God; and in this respect it is expressly commanded by God that nothing be either added to or taken from the same. . . Therefore, **we do not admit any other judge than God himself, who proclaims by the Holy Scriptures what is true, what is false, what is to be followed, or what to be avoided. . . We teach that the will of God is explained for us in the law of God, what he wills or does not will us to do, what is good and just, or what is evil and unjust.** Therefore, we confess that the law is good and holy. (5.001-5.002, 5.013, 5.080)

The Theological Declaration of Barmen: **Try the spirits whether they are of God!** Prove also the words of the Confessional Synod of the German Evangelical Church to **see whether they agree with Holy Scripture** and with the Confessions of the Fathers. **If you find that we are speaking contrary to Scripture, then do not listen to us! But if you find that we are taking our stand upon Scripture, then let no fear or temptation keep you from treading with us the path of faith and obedience to the Word of God. . .** (8.04)

The Confession of 1967: The one sufficient revelation of God is Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate, to whom the Holy Spirit bears unique and authoritative witness through the **Holy Scriptures, which are received and obeyed as the word of God written . . .** (9.27)

For Presbyterians, it is Scripture--not human opinions, feelings, scholarship or reason--which is our authority for distinguishing right from wrong and for living in a way that honors God.

In recent years, a competing view of authority has increasingly challenged this Confessional understanding. The competing view holds that, instead of Scripture being the authority, "Jesus" is the authority, and his new revelation is discerned separately from, and may contradict and supersede, the revelation given in Scripture. This competing viewpoint, however, stands in stark contrast to our denomination's constitutional teaching and to the place Jesus himself gave to the Old Testament scriptures when he lived on earth. Jesus confirmed the absolute authority of the Old Testament for others and submitted to it himself (Matt 5:18-19, Luke 16:17, Matt 19:4, John 10:35, Matt 4:1-10, Luke 4:1-12). He chastened the Jewish theologians because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matt 22:29, Mark 12:24). Jesus declared that he came to fulfill the Scriptures (Matt 5:17, Matt 21:42, Luke 4:21).

Others tell us that the final authority for Christians is not Scripture, but Christ, whom we must regard as standing apart from Scripture and above it. He is its Judge; and we, as His disciples must judge Scripture by Him, receiving only what is in harmony with His life and teaching and rejecting all that is not. **But who is this Christ, the Judge of Scripture? Not the Christ of the New Testament and of history. That Christ does not judge Scripture; He obeys it and fulfills it.** By word and deed He endorses the authority of the whole of it. **Certainly He is the final authority for Christians; that is precisely why Christians are bound to acknowledge the authority of Scripture. Christ teaches them to do so. A Christ who permits His followers to set Him up as the Judge of Scripture, One by whom its authority must be confirmed before it becomes binding and by whose adverse sentence it is in places annulled, is a Christ of human imagination,** made in the theologian's own image, One whose attitude to Scripture is the opposite to that of the Christ of history. (2)

Presbyterians do not believe God gives new revelations that contradict what Scripture teaches. Scripture is our sole authority.

Biblical teaching about marriage, singleness and sexuality

In Scripture, God teaches us how to live in a way that honors him in every aspect of our being, including our sexuality. The boundaries God places on our lives do not limit our joy, but instead enable us to experience joy more deeply and to live life at its fullest and best. Biblical teaching related to marriage, singleness and sexual morality provides a sufficient basis for the people of God to know his will, to live in a way that is pleasing to him, and to receive his blessing, whether in marriage or the single life.

Scripture reveals that God created humanity as male and female and ordained the relationship of marriage to be the norm for human living. Within a life-long covenant of marriage, a man and a woman are to fully experience and enjoy sexual intimacy as God's good gift and are to welcome children as a blessing from God. (Gen 1:27-28, Gen 2:24-25, Psalm 127:3, Psalm 128:3-4, Matt 19:4-6, Eph 5:22-33, I Cor 7:1-9)

Scripture also teaches that some are called to live in singleness for a portion or all of their adult life. While our culture convinces many that they are captive to their biological drives, whether heterosexual or homosexual, Scripture teaches that God enables his people to overcome any temptation. By abstaining from sexual intimacy in obedience to God, the unmarried believer demonstrates love for God and is enabled to focus on serving him with undivided devotion. Faithfully serving God always brings blessing and joy. (I Cor 7:32-35, I Cor 7:17, Gal 5:22-26, I Cor 6:19-20, John 14:15, I John 5:3-4a, John 15:9-11, I Cor 10:13, 2 Peter 2:19, Psalm 119:30-32, Psalm 73:25-26, Psalm 16:11)

Ours is a culture in which many unmarried couples "live together" and adultery is common, but Scripture clearly forbids such practices and warns that sexual immorality in any form is not to be found among the people of God. (Ex 20:14, Mark 7:18-23, Matt 15:17-20, Jude 3-8, Rom 13:12-14, I Cor 6:9-11, I Cor 6:18-20, I Cor 5:1-13, Gal 5:16-24, Eph 5:1-10, Col 3:1-10, I Thes 4:1-8, Heb 12:14-29, Heb 13:4, Rev 21:1-8, Rev 22:10-20)

While our culture is increasingly accepting of the practice of homosexuality, Scripture unambiguously includes homosexual practice among the forms of sexual immorality. (Lev 18:22, Lev 20:13, I Cor 6:9-11, Rom 1:26-27, Jude 7)

Confessional teaching

The *Book of Confessions* contains statements which, although subordinate to Scripture, are standards in our denomination. We believe the confessions are a reliable exposition of what Scripture leads us to believe and to do.

Some who seek to change the standards related to sexual morality argue that since we don't follow Old Testament dietary laws or many other Old Testament instructions, we shouldn't have to follow biblical teaching about sexual morality, claiming that biblical moral teaching is equally outdated. The Westminster Confession (6.103 - 6.104) explains that there are three types of laws found in the Old Testament: ceremonial laws (which are no longer in effect under the New Testament), judicial laws (which are no longer in effect) and moral laws (which are still binding). We are always bound by God's moral law. The freedom we have as Christians is freedom to serve God in holiness:

The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the Creator who gave it. Neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen, this obligation.

Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. . . (6.105 - 6.106)

They who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, do thereby destroy the end of Christian liberty; which is, that, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life. (6.110)

Sexual morality is addressed in a number of our confessions (7.247-7.249, 4.108-4.109, 5.245-5.247, 5.251, 6.131-6.139, 7.130, 9.47). In teaching what we must avoid, the confessions specifically include "adultery," "fornication" and "sodomy" (7.249) as well as "homosexual perversion" (4.087) as being forbidden by God. In teaching our positive obligations, the confessions and catechisms emphasize that because our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 6:19-20) all Christians, married and single, have the duty of chastity (purity) in "body, mind, affections, words, and behavior":

The Larger Catechism

Q. 137. Which is the Seventh Commandment?

A. The Seventh Commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

Q. 138. What are the duties required in the Seventh Commandment?

A. The duties required in the Seventh Commandment are: chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behavior, and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel, marriage by those that have not the gift of continency, conjugal love, and cohabitation; diligent labor in our callings; shunning of all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto. (7.247 - 7.248)

The Heidelberg Catechism

Q. 108. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. That all unchastity is condemned by God, and that we should therefore detest it from the heart, and live chaste and disciplined lives, whether in holy wedlock or in single life.

Q. 109. Does God forbid nothing more than adultery and such gross sins in this commandment?

A. Since both our body and soul are a temple of the Holy Spirit, it is his will that we keep both pure and holy. Therefore he forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires and whatever may excite another person to them. (4.108 - 4.109)

The Westminster Confession teaches that "the Church is concerned with the establishment of marriage in the Lord as Scripture sets it forth." (6.132) It also defines marriage as uniting one man and one woman and describes some of the ways in which married Christians are to show their love and care for one another:

Christian marriage is an institution ordained of God, blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ, established and sanctified for the happiness and welfare of mankind, into which spiritual and physical union one man and one woman enter, cherishing a mutual esteem and love, bearing with each other's infirmities and weaknesses, comforting each other in trouble, providing in honesty and industry for each other and for their household, praying for each other, and living together the length of their days as heirs of the grace of life. . . . Marriage is a union between one man and one woman, designed of God to last so long as they both shall live. Marriage is designed for the mutual help of husband and wife; for the safeguarding, undergirding, and development of their moral and spiritual character, for the propagation of children and the rearing of them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (6.131, 6.133 - 6.134)

The Confession of 1967 speaks of the distorted view of sexuality held by our culture and describes the Church's obligation to help those caught in the moral confusion of our time by leading people out of that confusion and into the new life in Christ:

The relationship between man and woman exemplifies in a basic way God's ordering of the interpersonal life for which he created mankind. Anarchy in sexual relationships is a symptom of man's alienation from God, his neighbor, and himself. . . . The church, as the household of God, is called to lead men out of this alienation into the responsible freedom of the new life in Christ. . . . The church comes under the judgment of God and invites rejection by man when it fails to lead men and women into the full meaning of life together, or withholds the compassion of Christ from those caught in the moral confusion of our time. (9.47)

The confessions also summarize the teaching of Scripture in recognizing that we all fail to live up to God's standards. The proper response of a Christian who recognizes sin in his or her life is not to rationalize and defend it, but rather to acknowledge and confess the sin to God, to ask for his forgiveness, and to repent--to turn away from sin and purpose to live in obedience. The Westminster Confession emphasizes the necessity of repentance and makes it clear that repentance is both a gift of God and a duty:

Repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ. By it a sinner, out of the sight and sense, not only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness of his sins, as contrary to the holy nature and righteous law of God, and upon the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent, so grieves for, and hates his sins, as to turn from them all unto God, purposing and endeavoring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments. Although repentance be not to be rested in as any satisfaction for sin, or any cause of the pardon thereof, which is the act of God's free grace in Christ; yet is it of such necessity to all sinners, that none may expect pardon without it. As there is no sin so small but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent. Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, but it is every man's duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly. (6.081 - 6.085)

When we confess our sins to God and turn away from them, endeavoring to live a new life of obedience, God wants us to live in the full assurance that because of what Jesus has done for us, we are forgiven and freed from all that is in our past. The Heidelberg catechism teaches:

Q. 56. What do you believe concerning "the forgiveness of sins"?

A. That, for the sake of Christ's reconciling work, God will no more remember my sins or the sinfulness with which I have to struggle all my life long; but that he graciously imparts to me the righteousness of Christ so that I may never come into condemnation. (4.056)

Jesus said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10). He also said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15). When Satan tempted Eve in the garden, Satan lied when he told her that God's words were not trustworthy. Satan also lied when he said obeying God would deprive Adam and Eve of something that would be good for them. (Gen 2:16-17; Gen 3:4-5)

God has made clear to us the boundaries that accompany his gift of sexuality. We must decide if God is worthy of our trust and if we will endeavor to obey what he has commanded. The culture that surrounds us perverts and abuses this good gift of sexuality, and it is all-too-easy for Christians to absorb the culture's distorted view and to see sexuality as the world sees it. But surely the God who created us, redeemed us at the cost of his own blood, and calls us his own children can be trusted to set the boundaries of our lives in a way that gives him glory and gives us the greatest blessings.

"Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Rom 12:2)

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." (I Cor 6:19-20)

"This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. . . ." (I John 5:3-4a)

"Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life . . ." (Phil 2:14-16a)

"Thou dost show me the path of life: in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm 16:11)

Book of Order requirements for officers

The *Book of Order* includes these requirements for church officers:

. . . In addition to possessing the necessary gifts and abilities, natural and acquired, those who undertake particular ministries should be persons of strong faith, dedicated discipleship, and love of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Their manner of life should be a demonstration of the Christian gospel in the church and in the world . . . Those who are called to office in the church are to lead a life in obedience to Scripture and in conformity to the historic confessional standards of the church. Among these standards is the requirement to live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman (W-4.9001), or chastity in singleness. Persons refusing to repent of any self-acknowledged practice which the confessions call sin shall not be ordained and/or installed as deacons, elders, or ministers of the Word and Sacrament. (G-6.0106 a,b)

The *Book of Order* also specifies that for officers, there are limits to freedom of conscience:

It is necessary to the integrity and health of the church that the persons who serve in it as officers shall adhere to the essentials of the Reformed faith and polity as expressed in the Book of Confessions and the Form of Government. So far as may be possible without serious departure from these standards, without infringing on the rights and views of others, and without obstructing the constitutional governance of the church, freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained.

It is to be recognized, however, that in becoming a candidate or officer of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds. His or her conscience is captive to the Word of God as interpreted in the standards of the church so long as he or she continues to seek or hold office in that body. . .(G-6.0108 a,b)

The *Book of Order's* constitutional questions for all officers reinforce these understandings:

"Will you fulfill your office in obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of Scripture, and be continually guided by our confessions?"

"Do you sincerely receive and adopt the essential tenets of the Reformed faith as expressed in the confessions of our church as authentic and reliable expositions of what Scripture leads us to believe and do, and will you be instructed and led by those confessions as you lead the people of God?" (W-4.4003)

Although the General Assemblies in 2006 and 2008 issued "Authoritative Interpretations" of the *Book of Order* allowing candidates for ordination to declare "departures" from ordination standards, "Authoritative Interpretations" can only interpret and cannot amend the *Book of Order*. Excerpts from two GAPJC rulings issued November 2, 2009 (after the "Authoritative Interpretations" of both General Assemblies) make it clear that the requirements of G-6.0106b continue to apply to all church officers without exception:

From *Naegeli et. al. v. Presbytery of San Francisco* (Remedial Case 219-11): "It would be an obstruction of constitutional governance to permit examining bodies to ignore or waive a specific standard that has been adopted by the whole church, such as the 'fidelity and chastity' portion of G-6.0106b, or any other similarly specific provision."

From *Bierschwale et. al. v. Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area* (Remedial Case 219-08): "Having been restored to the exercise of the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament, [the individual who declared a departure from G-6.0106b] is fully accountable under all standards and requirements for ministers of Word and Sacrament to abide by the Constitution of the PC(USA), including G-6.0106b."

"Fidelity/chastity" is not an obscure point of theology, but rather is commanded unambiguously by God in the teaching of Scripture, is specifically taught in our confessions, and is a requirement which our presbyteries have carefully examined and reaffirmed time after time in recent years of voting on proposed amendments to the *Book of Order*.

Over the past 40 years as our culture's sexual mores have radically changed, challenges to the biblical understanding of marriage, the single life and sexual morality have been unrelenting. When presented with each effort to redefine marriage and moral sexual expression, our presbyteries have consistently refused such changes and have reaffirmed the biblical and confessional understanding. God's definition of marriage and the limits of moral sexual expression are set forth in Scripture and do not change. It is

critical to our well-being as a church that the biblical and confessional standards are maintained and upheld throughout the whole denomination.

Endnotes

1. The following brief history is derived from *Hope Presbyterian Church v. Central Presbyterian Church* (Remedial case 206-3): In 1978 the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (UPCUSA) found that "unrepentant homosexual practice does not accord with the requirements for ordination set forth in the Form of Government. . . ." In 1979 the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) adopted a similar statement. These denominations merged in 1983 to become our present denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The 1985 GAPJC decision in *Union Presbyterian Church of Blasdell, New York, et. al. v. The Presbytery of Western New York* (Remedial case 197-9) was based on these statements and their reaffirmations by other General Assemblies. In an "Opinion concurring and dissenting in part" with the 1993 decision in *Hope Presbyterian Church v. Central Presbyterian Church* (Remedial case 206-3), five of the GAPJC members wrote that excluding from ordination those who engage in unrepentant homosexual practice was tantamount to amending the *Book of Order* without the approval of the presbyteries and if the denomination wished to have that as the constitutional law of the church, it must do so through constitutional amendment. The wording now contained in G-6.0106b accomplished that purpose in 1997.

2. J. I. Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972), pp 61-62.

Note: Throughout this article, use of **boldface type** was added to quoted material for emphasis and does not appear in the original sources.

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Appendix of Scripture references cited

Marriage

Genesis 1:27-28: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it . . ."

Genesis 2:24-25: For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Psalms 127:3: Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him.

Psalms 128:3-4: Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man blessed who fears the LORD.

Matthew 19:4-6: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Ephesians 5:22-33: Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

I Corinthians 7:1-9: Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Singleness

I Corinthians 7:32-35: I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

I Corinthians 7:17: Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him.

Galatians 5:22-26: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

I Corinthians 6:19-20: Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

John 14:15: If you love me, you will obey what I command.

I John 5:3-4a: This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. . . .

John 15:9-11: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

I Corinthians 10:13: No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

2 Peter 2:19: They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity--for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.

Psalms 119:30-32: I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your laws. I hold fast to your statutes, O Lord; do not let me be put to shame. I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.

Psalms 73:25-26: Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is nothing upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.

Psalms 16:11: Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Sexual immorality

Exodus 20:14: "You shall not commit adultery."

Mark 7:18-23: "'Are you so dull?' he asked. 'Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him "unclean"? For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.' (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") He went on: 'What comes out of a man is what makes him "unclean." For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man "unclean.'"

Matthew 15:17-20: “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man ‘unclean.’ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him ‘unclean.’”

Jude 3-8: “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire. In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.”

Romans 13:12-14: “The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”

1 Corinthians 6:18-20: “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

1 Corinthians 5:1-13: “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife. And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you.”

Galatians 5:16-24: “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”

Ephesians 5:1-10: “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.”

Colossians 3:1-10: “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ

in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

1Thessalonians 4:1-8: “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.”

Hebrews 12:14-29: “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears. You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, because they could not bear what was commanded: “If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.” The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, “I am trembling with fear.” But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” The words “once more” indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

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

Revelation 21:1-8: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

Revelation 22:10-20: “Then he told me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy.’ ‘Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star. The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

Homosexual practice

Leviticus 18:22: “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.”

Leviticus 20:13: “If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Romans 1:26-27: “Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”

Jude 7: “In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”