

CHAPTER 8

God's Standard For Marriage

Christian marriage was designed in heaven for the blessing and good of man, and to portray the proper picture, as we studied in the last chapter. Sinful men have despised God's ideal for a man and a woman, and they have *distorted and corrupted the picture*.

Is There a Standard?

On what basis can we judge sexual behavior? How can we declare one type of behavior to be moral and another behavior to be immoral? By what yardstick can we measure such things? What authority do we have to label some activity as right or wrong? By what STANDARD can we say that a person is engaging in sinful conduct?

One of the darkest days of Israelite history was the period of the judges. At that time "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Depraved men were setting the standard and determining what was right. It may seem right in man's eyes, but the key question is this: *Is it right in God's eyes?* Men greatly err when it comes to recognizing and following a right course of action: "There is a way which _____ right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of _____" (Proverbs 14:12).

When man sets the **standard** then anything goes. Sinful men can justify anything as they reject and willfully ignore God's standards as clearly revealed in God's Word. Men and women of our day are busy doing what is right in their own eyes. They justify their position in the following ways: "We must not discriminate!" "People can't help being the way they are because it is genetic." "Who cares what a person does in private?" "What does it matter what two consenting adults do as long as it doesn't hurt anyone?" "Everyone is entitled to his or her own sexual preference." Etc.

Suppose that what these people are saying is true. What if there were no real objective **standard** outside of man? What if there were no God and no Bible and no Ten Commandments? If this were the case, then we would have to agree that we would have absolutely no basis by which we could condemn certain sexual practices, apart from our own personal preferences (likes and dislikes). Under these conditions man would set the standards, doing that which seems right in his own eyes.

Without any divine **standard** of morality, what would be wrong with **homosexuality** (sexual relations between two persons of the same sex)? Furthermore, what would be wrong with **bestiality** (sexual relations between a human being and an animal)? Could not the same arguments be used? "Am I not entitled to my own sexual preference?" "What is wrong with it as long as I am kind to the animal and we don't hurt anyone else?" Indeed, with no divine rule to measure right and wrong, what would be objectionable with adults having sexual relations with animals or even with young children? You may personally have a strong aversion to such practices, but who are you to impose your own personal standards on other people?

Indeed, apart from a divine **standard** of morality anything goes, including stealing and murder. Who is to say **murder** is wrong? It may be detestable to you, but the murderer is doing what seems right to him, is he not? What is wrong with ridding the world of some undesirable person? Apart from moral absolutes any kind of behavior or activity can be justified.

God's Plan For Man and Woman

God does have a **standard** by which behavior and sexual activity may be measured and judged, approved or disapproved. God's perfect plan for a man and a woman is to be found by going back to the very **beginning** (see Matthew 19:3-8). Deviations from God's **standard** are found in abundance in our society but "from the _____ it was not so" (Matthew 19:8). What did the Lord Jesus mean by "the **beginning**"? In Matthew 19:4 the Lord Jesus quoted from Genesis chapter 1. In Matthew 19:5 the Lord Jesus quoted from Genesis chapter 2.

It is obvious that the Lord Jesus understood the first two chapters of the Bible as being accurate and authoritative. It is in these two chapters that we find God's plan for a man and a woman.

Genesis Chapter 1

In Genesis 1:27 we learn that God created man. In this brief verse the verb "created" is found 3 times emphasizing man's unique creation in the image of God. Man is not the product of blind, chance evolution taking place over millions of years. Those who see themselves as mere "accidents of nature" and the result of a long evolutionary process have tried to eliminate from their minds the all-important concept of a personal Creator-God before whom we are responsible and accountable. For the true evolutionist there can be no real moral absolutes, just the ruthless survival of the fittest in a world where there seems to be no real rhyme or reason for anything.

But in the beginning it was not as the evolutionists depict! There was a personal **Creator-God** who created man male and female. God's purpose for man was that there should be two sexes, male and female. Every person is either a "**he**" or a "**she**." God did not divide mankind into three or four or five sexes. There is only the male sex and the female sex, and every person is either a male or female because this is how each person has been made by the Creator. " _____ and _____ created He them" (Genesis 1:27).

It is obvious that the two sexes are not the same. They are profoundly different. Girls are not boys and boys are not girls. Women are not men and men are not women. Adam was different from Eve and Eve was different from Adam because God made them so. Today in the minds of many there is wrong and unhealthy thinking resulting in a trend towards **unisex** (one sex). It is man's wrong attempt to try to **minimize** the differences which God has made. Thus women in some ways look, dress and act like men and men in some ways look, dress and act like women. God is strongly opposed to this because it is contrary to the differences and distinctions which He made at the **beginning**: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are _____ unto the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 22:5).

The word "**abomination**" in Deuteronomy 22:5 is a very strong word. It means that God detests it, hates it and is nauseated over it. It makes God sick (as it were)! This is because it is so contrary to God's original plan. God wants men to look, dress and act like men because this is how He made them. God wants women to look, dress and act like women, because they ought to rightly represent what they are.

Genesis Chapter 2

In Genesis chapter 2 we learn that Adam was created first. Adam was made from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7) and Eve was made from Adam (Genesis 2:22). "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man" (1 Corinthians 11:8).

How did the institution of marriage originate? Did it gradually evolve from more primitive institutions and customs? Did a group of "cave men" or "ape men" meet together and vote in favor of starting marriages? Did an ancient and powerful king send forth an edict or law declaring that men and women should be joined together in marriage? When did the first marriage take place? Whose idea was it? How did marriage begin?

Genesis chapter two answers these questions very clearly:

Who declared that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18)?

Who said, "I will make an help meet (helper suitable) for him" (Genesis 2:18)?

Who took a part of man and from it made a woman (Genesis 2:21-22)?

Who brought the woman to the man (Genesis 2:22)?

Who performed the first marriage ceremony (Genesis 2:18-22)?

Who instituted marriage? Whose idea was it?

Who is responsible for joining a man and woman together (Matthew 19:6)?

Marriage is God's holy institution. We need to pay very close attention to that first marriage so that we can learn what God intended **from the beginning**. In Genesis 2:22 we are told that **God brought the woman (Eve) to the man (Adam)**. Notice carefully what God did not do:

God did not bring an animal to Adam for a marriage partner.

God did not bring a man to Adam for a marriage partner. (It was Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve!)

God did not bring two women to Adam.

God did not bring ten women to Adam.

God brought just one woman to Adam: **One woman for one man; this is God's all-wise plan!**

Based on the above facts, we can arrive at some very simple and yet important conclusions:

1. The marriage partner must not be an animal but a person.
2. The marriage partner must be the opposite sex.
3. There should be ONE marriage partner, not more than one.

Another conclusion, based on the fact that man should **cleave** to his wife (Genesis 2:24), is as follows:

4. The marriage union is to be permanent (compare Matthew 19:6), until broken by death (compare Romans 7:2-3).

These four simple rules are what God established **at the beginning**. Those who do not like these rules have a problem with the God who set them up. Serious problems develop whenever people deviate from what God established in the beginning. In Leviticus 20 we have some examples of how people have broken God's simple rules:

In Leviticus 20:15 we have a violation of Rule #1.

In Leviticus 20:13 we have a violation of Rule #2.

In Leviticus 20:10 we have a violation of Rule #3 (If the man had remained loyal to his **one marriage partner** the adultery would not have taken place.) An early violation of Rule #3 is also seen in Genesis 4:19. A massive violation of Rule #3 is seen in 1 Kings 11:3.

Procreation and God's Perfect Plan

One of the reasons God made the man and woman as He did was for the purpose of reproduction. After God made man **male and female**, He said to them, "Be _____ and multiply and replenish [fill] the earth" (Genesis 1:28). God's plan was for many people to live on the earth, not just two. God created two and from these two would come all mankind (today numbering in the billions). For this to be possible God designed the man and woman with the ability to reproduce and bring forth children. This is natural, normal and necessary for the propagation of the human race.

When it comes to reproduction it should be obvious that the man is designed for the woman and the woman is designed for the man, according to God's perfect plan and matchless design. A man is not designed for a man and a woman is not designed for a woman. Consider the illustration of nuts and bolts. You cannot put together two bolts and you cannot put together two nuts. A nut is not designed for another nut, it is designed for a bolt. To try to fit two nuts together (or two bolts) is to go against the plan and design for which they were made. It is impossible to screw a nut into a nut. **Homosexuality** is a violation of Rule #2, and it clearly goes against God's plan and design. It is impossible for children to ever result from a homosexual relationship. If homosexuality were universally practiced worldwide, then the human race would become extinct after one generation! This is why according to Romans chapter 1 homosexuality is unnatural and against nature (verses 26-27). Even the animals who follow their natural instincts know that a male should mate with a female, and not a male with a male. The animals instinctively follow God's order. Sinful men often rebel against God's natural order of things.

The Marriage Relationship Involves Far More Than Procreation

Bringing forth children is important, but this is not the number one reason why God gave to man the wonderful gift of being able to have sexual relations with a marriage partner. Normally children are meant to be the fruit of a love relationship between husband and wife, but there are exceptions to this normal rule. For example, there are some couples who are unable to have any children (for a number of possible reasons). Does this inability to have children mean that the couple cannot fulfill the purpose of their sexuality? Not at all. God has given the gift of sex for the enjoyment of the marriage partners as they express their love to each other even in a physical way. This love-relationship has a physical aspect to it that ought to be precious and enjoyable whether or not God is pleased to give children.

The Blessedness of the Marriage Bed

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed _____: but whoremongers and adulterers God will _____" (Hebrews 13:4). God intended that the marriage bed should be holy and pure and right and a great blessing for a man and his wife (see Hebrews 13:4). God and the Bible never condemn sex but only the wrong kind of sex. The wrong kind of sex is that which violates and goes against God's original purpose. But in God's purpose and in God's time, the marriage bed (Hebrews 13:4) is meant to be a place of enjoyment and satisfaction for both husband and wife.

The book of Proverbs has much to say about the wrong kind of sexual involvement, but it also has something to say about the right kind. "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well. Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad, and rivers of waters in the streets. Let them be only thine own, and not strangers' with thee. Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love" (Proverbs 5:15-19).

Within the boundaries and confines of marriage, there is safety and satisfaction and sure delight. The husband is to rejoice with his wife (Proverbs 5:18) and be sexually satisfied by her (Proverbs 5:19) and he is to be exhilarated or intoxicated with her love (Proverbs 5:19--see the meaning of the Hebrew term "ravished"). At the same time he is strongly warned not to look elsewhere for satisfaction but to be content and thankful for the wife God gave to him when he was young (see Proverbs 5:15-18,20-23).

The bed of marriage is **undefiled** (Hebrews 13:4). It is pure and unsoiled and not polluted. It is intended to be enjoyable and right and pleasurable. It is a mutual expression of love as the husband **gives** of himself to please his wife and the wife **gives** of herself to please the husband (1 Corinthians 7:3). Marriage is a good thing and God honors it and blesses it: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD" (Proverbs 18:22).

Deviation From God's Perfect Plan

Marriage was designed in heaven for the blessing and good of mankind. It was also meant to portray a wonderful picture of the believer's relationship to Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 5:21-33). Sinful men have polluted God's purpose in marriage and have distorted and corrupted the picture.

Today we live in a world system (1 John 2:15) and in a society that cares little about God's standards. Instead men approve and applaud that which deviates (compare Romans 1:32). This is done not just by pornography which is inundating the land, but also by many television shows, internet postings, radio programs, movies, videos, books, magazines, etc. Today a young person who remains sexually pure until marriage is often considered an oddity and even an object of scorn. ***It is a very sad thing when the violation of a standard becomes so common that it becomes the norm.*** Man does what is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25), and he thinks, "If everyone else is doing it, how can it be wrong?" The believer knows that if God sets the standard in His Word and if man violates what God has said, then it is wrong no matter how many are doing it (see Exodus 23:2).

In Hebrews 13:4 we learn that God sanctions the marriage bed but He strongly warns that His judgment will fall upon those guilty of either of these two things:

1. **FORNICATION** (Greek--*Porneia*) is a general word which refers to any kind of unlawful sexual intercourse (we get our English word "pornography" from this Greek word). It would include such things as sexual immorality, prostitution, premarital sex and even homosexuality. In Hebrews 13:4 it probably refers primarily to those sexual sins committed by unmarried persons (since the next word refers to a sin that a married person commits).

2. **ADULTERY** (Greek--*Moicheia*) is a more specific word which refers to a married person having unlawful sexual relations with someone that he or she is not married to. Thus it involves going beyond the marriage relationship to a third person. In Hebrews 13:4 it refers to those sexual sins of unfaithfulness committed by married persons.

Hebrews 13:4 does not condemn sex which is good and honorable and right and part of God's original plan for mankind when He created man male and female. However, Hebrews 13:4 strongly condemns sex which is **outside of marriage** (both premarital sex which is sex before marriage and extramarital sex which is sex during marriage with someone who is not one's legitimate marriage partner).

"Safe Sex"?

Just as on a mountainous road there are often guard rails to help keep the car on the road and prevent a disaster, so also God has good and safe **boundaries** which man needs to stay within

for his own benefit and safety. When it comes to sex there are too many young people who are plunging off the road and falling into disaster, often resulting in wounds that never heal and scars that always remain. Do not deviate from God's road! Do not turn aside from God's path! Stay on the road of sexual purity and you will forever be glad that you did. The God who created you surely knows what is best for you. Trust and obey Him!

We hear much talk today about **safe sex**, but the sex that is being referred to is most often **sinful sex** (sex outside of the marriage bed, especially premarital sex). So what people are really talking about is SAFE SIN!

The message being broadcast today is this: "It is all right to sin as long as you practice **safe sin**. Drunkenness is okay as long as someone sober drives you home. Narcotics are okay as long as you use clean needles. Promiscuity is okay as long as you take safe precautions. It is all right to sin, but please, play it **safe!**" The Bible gives the true perspective: "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. For the wages of sin is death" (James 1:15; Rom. 6:23).

Harmless Poison?!!

Safe sin is a flat contradiction. It would be like talking of a "healthy disease" or "harmless poison" or "clean dirt" or a "lively death." It would be like a mouse talking about a safe mousetrap or a fish speaking of a safe hook or a pig thinking of a safe slaughterhouse. **Sin is never safe!** It is always dangerous, destructive, damning; and sin always brings with it disastrous consequences. Joseph was tempted in the direction of "safe sin" (Genesis 39:7-12) but he refused and **he abstained**, fearing a holy God instead (verse 9).

What is "SAFE SEX"?

The four simple rules already discussed when taken together form God's definition of safe sex. God has instituted marriage and within the framework of marriage there are four simple rules which God has established because God wants to outwork His holy purpose and plan for man. Those who follow these four simple rules can enjoy sex which is not only safe, but which is pure and unsoiled and enjoyable and pleasurable and holy and wonderful.

Let's review the rules again:

Rule #1- The marriage partner must not be an animal but a person.

Rule #2- The marriage partner must be the opposite sex .

Rule #3- There should be one marriage partner, not more than one.

Rule #4- The marriage union is to be permanent (compare Matthew 19:6), until broken by death (compare Romans 7:2-3).

Of course, basic to all these rules is the assumption that the sexual partner must be one's legitimate MARRIAGE PARTNER (Hebrews 13:4).

What then is God's definition of **unsafe sex**? Any deviation from God's original purpose or plan, any breaking of the four simple rules given above, would be unsafe and very dangerous sex, subject to the judgment of God (Hebrews 13:4).

The Person who trusts in the Lord will never be a loser. Following God's Word is always safe:

Psalm 37:3-5