

## THE LAND IS FULL OF ADULTERERS

It can sound like a question for a seminary-level Bible quiz. “What did Lot, Reuben, Judah, Samson, David, Amnon, Absalom, Hophni, Phinehas, and Abner have in common?” The simple answer is that they were all Old Testament Bible characters. The sad answer is that they all fell victim to sexual temptation – their names forever inscribed in the lists of “Moral Failures in the Bible.”

- Lot, the nephew of Abraham, with his two daughters (Genesis 19:30-38)
- Reuben, the son of Jacob, with Balham, his father’s concubine (Genesis 35:22)
- Judah, Reuben’s brother, the son of Jacob, with his daughter-in-law (Genesis 38:15 ff.)
- Samson, the Judge of Israel, with the prostitute (Judges 16:1-2)
- David, the King of Israel, with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-5)
- Amnon, the son of David, who rapes Tamar, his sister (2 Samuel 13:1-20)
  - Absalom, the son of David, with his father’s concubines (2 Samuel 16:22)
- Hophni, the Priest, the son of Eli, with the women in the Temple (I Samuel 2:22)
- Phinehas, the Priest, the son of Eli, with the women in the Temple (I Samuel 2:22)
- Abner, the Commander of Saul’s army, with Rizpah, Saul’s concubine (2 Samuel 3:7)

A second Bible quiz question follows, “To what local churches did the New Testament writers give clear instructions regarding immorality?” The answer is also quite lengthy. Understanding our human propensity to compromise God’s holy standards, the New Testament writers presented their specific prohibitions against the sins of fornication and adultery:

- To the Church in Rome (Romans 6:19)
- To the Church in Corinth (I Corinthians 5:1)
- To The churches in Galatia (Galatians 5:19)
- To the Church in Ephesus (Ephesians 5:3)
- To the Church in Philippi (Philippians 4:8)
- To the Church in Colossae (Colossians 3:5-7)
- To the Church in Thessalonica (I Thessalonians 4:3-8)
- To the Church in Pergamum (Revelation 2:14)
- To the Church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:20-22)

Actually, from the clear mandate given by the first Jerusalem Council around 50 A.D., we have this wide-sweeping admonition to *all* the churches in every city and in every generation, including our own, “You are to abstain from . . . sexual immorality” (Acts 15:29; cf. Acts 21:25).

Twenty-seven hundred years ago, Jeremiah, the “Weeping Prophet,” lamented the condition of his fellow Hebrews, with these indicting words: “The land is full of adulterers . . .” (Jeremiah 23:10). That was certainly not unique to Israel.

Demosthenes, the famous orator of Greece, described the lifestyle of his fellow fourth century B.C. Greeks: “We keep prostitutes for pleasure, we keep mistresses for the day-to-day needs of the body. . .”<sup>1</sup> Ancient Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Rome fared no better.

In the ancient world, it was not uncommon to find temples of worship next to houses of prostitution. You were expected to enter one door to worship with your spirit and exit the other, after having worshiped with your body. Imagine the pressure of a young man in first-century Rome, walking down some ancient Via De La Crud, and being propositioned by a temple prostitute, urging him to do his *religious duty*.

### **THE NEW MORALITY IS THE OLD IMMORALITY WITH A NEW NAME**

There is really no need to address the obvious struggle with immorality in every century since the fall of Adam and Eve. We are well into this 21<sup>st</sup> century, facing our own culturally unique pressures. One only wonders what Jeremiah would write, if he were alive today. Perhaps his headline would read, “The Land is Still Full of Adulterers: The ‘New Morality’ Is Really Just the Old Immorality with a New Name.”

Sadly, the new morality of our day may have even surpassed the old immorality of Jeremiah’s day. This shouldn’t surprise us. Two millennia ago, the Apostle Paul forewarned: “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self . . . unholy . . . without self-control . . . haters of good . . . lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God . . .” (2 Timothy 3:1-4). Unimpressed with the false hopes of evolutionists and new-agers who try to convince us that we are evolving into better people, I believe modern man is man at his very worst. The evidence in our day is far too clear.

Some thirty years ago I was shocked to read the appalling conclusions made by Wardell Pomeroy, the co-author of the original Kinsey Report. In an April 4, 1980 *Time Magazine* article entitled, “Sexes: Attacking the Last Taboo” Pomeroy is quoted as saying, “It is time to admit that incest need not to be perversion or a symptom of mental illness . . . Incest between . . . children and adults . . . can be beneficial.”<sup>2</sup> In the same article, another clinical professor of psychiatry added this absurd remark, “Children have the right to express themselves sexually, even with members of their own family.”<sup>3</sup> The article went on to describe the sex-research establishment’s view that, “. . . all forms of consensual sexuality are good, or at least neutral; problems arise not from sex, but from

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<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonian. Revised Edition.* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press. 1975), 199.

<sup>2</sup> “Sexes: Attacking the Last Taboo.” *Time Magazine.* (14 April 1980). The article can be found on-line at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,923966,00.html>

<sup>3</sup> “Sexes: Attacking the Last Taboo.”

guilt, fear and repression.”<sup>4</sup> Is it any wonder that now we have such an amazing rise in child pornography, incest and abuse of children?

Over a number of years, my wife and I have cared for twenty-three foster-children. Many of them have been the innocent victims of sexual abuse. With this devilish philosophy being espoused by so-called experts, why does it surprise us to hear recent reports of the countless millions of children who are abducted and forced to become a part of the multi-billion dollar child sex industry?

Most of us, at least at this point, are still repulsed by the onslaught of pedophilia and child abuse. Yet, one wonders when that, too, will become culturally acceptable, given our rapidly growing acceptance of the view that we are genetically pre-disposed to fornication, adultery and homosexuality. We are not far from the widespread view that sex with children or animals is normal. I expect, even in these, we will accept the argument, “It is not a choice. I was born that way.”

Indeed, given the way things are going, the new morality may soon top the old immorality. To paraphrase an old saying, “If God doesn’t deal with us soon, He may have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.”<sup>15</sup>

Beyond the obvious disdain of the more public sexual sins, comes the even more pervasive private struggle with pornography. We live in a “pornified culture,”<sup>6</sup> in which we are constantly bombarded with immoral enticements from every imaginable form of media. New waves of Internet filtering companies are being formed to help us fight off the ever-invasive pornography. Sexually explicit materials fill our email in-boxes and threaten to entangle even more of us. No wonder they call it the web.

Beyond the standard fare of illicit sexual images, we are now being offered new opportunities for “cyber-cheating in electronic bedrooms”<sup>7</sup>, and a host of multi-sensory sexual experiences, all devoid of human contact.

Some may argue that these sexually explicit presentations are just fiction - the expressions of man’s fantasies. Let’s talk about *reality*. I need not exhaust you with another mountain of statistics regarding the numbers of *real* illicit affairs, *real* rapes, *real* cases of incest and sexual abuse resulting in *real* unwanted pregnancies, *real* cases of sexually transmitted diseases, and *real* crimes of passion. These aren’t fantasies! The

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<sup>4</sup> “Sexes: Attacking the Last Taboo.”

<sup>5</sup> I am reminded of Jude 7, “. . . just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 7).

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Richard Winters, “Sense and Sexuality: The Search for Sexual Sanity in a Confusing Culture” (seminar presented at the European Leadership Forum. Eger, Hungary, May 2010). Also verified by December 30, 2010 phone conversation. Dr Winters is Professor of Practical Theology and Director of Covenant Seminary’s counseling program. He is a true ally in the fight for moral purity in the Body of Christ.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Richard Winters, “Sense and Sexuality: The Search for Sexual Sanity in a Confusing Culture” (seminar presented at the European Leadership Forum. Eger, Hungary, May 2010).

countless stories of destroyed lives aren't fiction! Even the inevitable disillusionment and disappointment in this new wave of sexual disconnection is becoming increasingly more obvious. In the words etched on the gravestone of the hypochondriac, "I told you I was sick."

## **SURELY OUR SIN HAS FOUND US OUT**

Perhaps you remember when "dial-a porn" was a new phenomenon. A law enforcement officer, who had attended one of our purity conferences, sent me the following account of his own unforgettable experience. It brought a dramatic principle to the forefront of his life and mine.

One night at about quarter past midnight, while my wife and kids were asleep in the other side of the house, I was flipping through the cable channels on the TV and came across a 900 number. . . .I decided to call the number, completely knowing that it was wrong. After listening to a girl on a recording for about four or five minutes, I heard a door open in my house. Fearing that I'd be discovered by either my wife or one of my kids, I quickly hung up the phone. Little did I know that the 900 number had a ten-minute minimum and an automatic call-back feature if less than ten minutes had elapsed on the phone call. Consequently, the phone rang and my wife picked it up on the bedroom extension. She answered the call and was greeted by the seductive voice of a young centerfold talking of what she would do to the man of her dreams in a hot tub. My wife called out to me, "Hey, it's for you; it's your whore!" and locked the bedroom door. The next morning, humiliated, I asked forgiveness from my wife and from God. Trust is hard enough to build in a marriage, but it is so easy to shoot down. Please share this story as you may see fit, and let others know that surely their sin will find them out.<sup>8</sup>

The Bible clearly speaks of the "passing pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25). As this brother found out, God also warns that our iniquities will surely find us out (Numbers 32:23).

I will not pretend that the pleasures of illicit sexual activity are not immensely attractive. They are. I also agree with this dear comrade in arms. It just isn't worth it!

This unsuspecting man wasn't actively looking for an opportunity to trade years of marital trust for a few unfulfilling moments of illicit pleasure. Opportunity came knocking at his door. That's what makes today's walk of purity so challenging. Sin is crouching at the door of our lives. It's becoming increasingly more difficult not to open that door – even for the people of God.

## **JUDGMENT BEGINS WITH THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD**

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<sup>8</sup> Letter to the author. Used by permission.

Perhaps you are thinking, “Of course the land is filled with immorality. What do we expect from the unbelieving world?” I agree. Consider the ancient and prophetic words of the Apostle John, “The world is passing away *and also its lusts*” (1 John 2:17, my emphasis).

We would certainly do well to discuss the need for personal purity in this immoral, unbelieving world. Oftentimes, that’s the context in which Christians express their greatest concerns. However, as a Pastor-Teacher, called to “equip the saints” (cf. Ephesians 4:11-12), I am more concerned with the problem of immorality in the rank and file of those who claim to be born-again believers. The Apostle Peter expressed it this way:

For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17).

In his booklet, *Sexual Temptation: How Christian Workers Can Win the Battle*, Randy Alcorn states what is, sadly, very familiar, “Much as we hate to admit it, the evangelical landscape is littered with the carcasses of lives and ministries decimated by sexual sin.”<sup>9</sup> The church is suffering from the carnage of its men, women, youth and even its leaders falling into the trap of immorality.

## **AS THE LEADERS GO, SO GO THE PEOPLE**

You’ve heard the stories, read the newspapers and listened to the cruel and shameful jokes of late night comedians, as they mock fallen Christian leaders. We can almost hear Nathan’s words as he confronted King David’s immorality, “. . . you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme . . .” (2 Samuel 12:14).

For many of us, this matter hits too close to home. We have experienced first-hand the devastation of a fallen Christian leader - a pastor or missionary we trusted, a parent we looked up to as a model, a friend or relative with whom we had confided, a fellow Christian with whom we had worked, witnessed and worshiped.

I spent five years doing doctoral research on why Christian leaders fall morally. I gathered the statistics, collected the sad stories, analyzed the problem and presented the solution.<sup>10</sup>

Frankly, we don’t need to be convinced by any more statistics or stories. We have felt the pain and disappointment, up close and personal. We have experienced the anger

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<sup>9</sup> Randy Alcorn. *Sexual Temptation: How Christian Workers Can Win the Battle*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2007, EPM Publishing (1<sup>st</sup> Edition by InterVarsity Press, 1989). 5.

<sup>10</sup> I refer you to my CD and DVD series as well as the seminar manual entitled, “*Immorality in the Ministry: The Pitfalls of Pastoral Power*” available through JARON Ministries International, Inc. [www.jaron.org](http://www.jaron.org)

and outrage deep within our souls. We are the multitude of victims, crying out, "When will this stop?"

Unless this matter is dealt with openly and honestly in the community of faith, we will continue to face an ever-building wave of immorality that threatens to wipe out even more of the church's leadership. Judgment must begin with the household of God, especially its pastors, missionaries, elders, deacons, teachers and leaders. We who are leaders in the Church must be willing to examine that painful beam in our own eyes before we can ever hope to make any headway in dealing with the speck in the eyes of the people around us (Matthew 7:1-5).

## **PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE?**

The story is told of an American, during the Cold War years, who was visiting a Russian zoo. He was accompanied by an official Communist government tour-guide. The American was directed to an enormous glass enclosure where a large bear was fast asleep. In the bear's paws was a little lamb. It, too, was asleep. The American remarked, "That's amazing." The Russian official replied, "Yes, in Russia we call that peaceful co-existence." "Well, how do you do it?" asked the American. The Russian whispered, "Well, every morning we have to put in a new lamb."

In the life of the believer, especially one who desires to be an ambassador of purity, there is no peaceful co-existence with immorality. Never has been.

***This year at the European Leadership Forum, there will be a special Pre-Forum Conference on Becoming an Ambassador of Purity, as well as Moral Purity Leadership Mentoring. Click [here](#) to learn more about the "Becoming an Ambassador of Purity" Pre-Forum Conference. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Moral Purity Leadership Mentoring, and to apply to attend.***



**Jim Cecy** serves as Senior Pastor-Teacher of Campus Bible Church in Fresno, California. He is also founder and President of JARON Ministries International, a training ministry for Christian leaders in the US and abroad. He has a Masters of Divinity in Bible Exposition from Talbot Theological Seminary and a Doctorate of Ministry from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary. He has pastored numerous churches in the Southern California area and is a conference and seminar speaker for hundreds of churches, schools, seminars, conference centers, Christian groups and denominations in US and abroad.