

**Sexual Distinctiveness Among the People of God**  
Come Out and Be Separate  
2 Cor. 6:17; Isa. 52:11

Introduction:

1. The people of God are different than the people of the world.
2. It is not because they are better than others, nor is it because they constitute some sort of superior race. It is because they are joined together with God in a special relationship.
3. For them, their relationship to God governs every aspect of their lives.
  - a. In the O.T. there were dietary differences. Some foods were considered clean and some unclean.
  - b. Personal morality, family life, their business affairs, and their worship all fell under the umbrella of their relationship to God.
  - c. God gave them statutes and ordinances that directed all these areas.
  - d. Their obedience to the instructions is reflective of their relationship with Him.
4. Nowhere is the uniqueness of their relationship to God more clearly defined than in their sexual relationships.
5. In this lesson we will focus on some of the key texts in both the O.T. and the N.T. that identify how the people of God are different from the world in their sexual expression.
6. Our objective is less about defining specific behaviors and more about understanding the basis of the distinctive behaviors.
7. The lesson is in two parts, the first focuses on the O.T. and the second on the N.T.

Discussion:

- I. One of the major O.T. texts addressing our subject is found in Lev. 18.
  - A. The passage opens with attention given to the contrasting cultures (2-5).
    1. Egypt and Canaan represent the culture of those people NOT in special relationship with God.
    2. The special covenant relationship is evidenced in the phrase, "I am the Lord your God." It is repeated 6 times in this chapter (2, 4, 5, 6, 21, 30).
    3. God said, "You shall not do what is done in Egypt, nor what is done in the land of Canaan. You shall NOT walk in their statutes; I am the Lord your God. You shall keep My statutes."
    4. The land of Canaan "spewed out" its inhabitants because of their behaviors (Lev. 18:24-25).
      - a. Their behaviors were "abominable."
      - b. They defiled the land.
      - c. They defiled the people.
  - B. This is NOT saying that God's people are racially superior to all other cultures.
    1. Genesis makes it clear that all people originate from God and are created in His image (Gen. 1:26-27).
    2. Paul reiterated the same in Acts 17:26 when he said, "He made from one every nation of mankind to live on the earth."

3. All are of equal value. All are to be respected. No race or group is any better or any worse than another.
- C. It IS saying that because of their relationship to God His people are to act differently than all other nations.
1. Read again Lev. 18:4-5.
  2. This traces back to contrasting sources of information. The people of God perform His judgments and keep His statutes. This is evident from the time of the giving of the Law at Sinai (Deut. 18:9-22).
    - a. "When you enter the land do not listen to the Canaanite sources."
    - b. "The Lord your God will raise up a prophet."
  3. Looking forward into the history of Israel we know they failed to listen to the right source and so became idolaters.
  4. Instead of accepting the revelation of God they rejected it and listened to the false prophets of the nations. Some ask, "Isn't one religion as good as another?" Well, no! It is not!
- D. The statutes and judgments of the Lord on sexual relations are given in verses 6ff.
1. Incest was prohibited. The various relationships that constitute incest are identified (Lev. 18:6-18). ("Uncovering nakedness" is a Hebrew idiom denoting sexual relations. Ex. You uncover your father's nakedness by having sex with his wife.)
    - a. No sex between you and your mother (7). (Note that it is males that are addressed. The principle is to be applied to the counter relationship also.)
    - b. No sex between you and step-mother (8). Cf. 1 Cor. 5:1.
    - c. No sex between you and your sister or half-sister when born at home or not (9).
    - d. No sex between you and your grandchildren (10). (Note that these are all negative. They constitute prohibitions against doing what is done in Egypt and Canaan.)
    - e. No sex between you and your half-sister born to your father and his wife (not your mother). It is interesting to note that heterosexual relationships are addressed.
    - f. No sex between you and your aunt (12-13).
    - g. No sex between you and your uncle's wife (14).
    - h. No sex between you and your daughter-in-law (15).
    - i. No sex between you and your brother's wife (16).
    - j. No sex between you and a woman and her daughter. Nor between you and her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter (17). It is lewdness (wickedness).
    - k. You shall not marry a woman and her sister as a rival (18).
      - l. Marriage with one's daughter is not addressed here but illicit as per Gen. 19:30ff. Also forbidden in Laws of Hammurabi (LH 154) and in the Hittite laws (HL 195).
  2. Approaching a woman for sex during her menstrual impurity was prohibited (19). This may hark back to life being associated with blood and the respect that was to be associated with life being in the blood.
  3. Adultery was prohibited (20).

4. Verse 21 raises questions. Is this talking about giving one's offspring as a burnt offering? To become a temple prostitute? To directing children to worship idols? It is a sexual context. Sexual rituals (some same sex) are generally recognized as part of the worship of such gods. God prohibited Israel from adopting the practices associated with the fertility gods of the Canaanites. It would appear that both hetero- and homo- sexual relationships characterized the Canaanites, and probably bestiality.
  5. In the next verse male homosexual sex is prohibited (22).
  6. And in the next, bestiality is prohibited (23). Described as a perversion.
  7. The penalties for violation of these injunctions are given in Lev. 20:10ff. Death. Burned with fire. Cut off from among God's people. Childlessness.
  8. Premarital sex and rape are addressed in Deut. 22.
  9. The assumptions underlying these injunctions are many. Without trying to identify all of them observe that marital sex is sanctioned. That in a marriage sex between a male and a female is sanctioned. This harks back to the design evident in Gen. 2:18ff.
- E. The reasons for these practices are identified in 18:24-30 (read). They are repeated in Lev. 20:22-26 (read). Note 20:27 (read).

#### Summary:

1. The instruction is clear. The people of God, because they are His people, discipline themselves by His instructions. They are not like the people of the world. While this involves all areas of life, it is also evident in their sexual discipline.
2. The people of God have violated this discipline. Examples are abundant. Abraham married his half-sister. Jacob married sisters. David committed adultery. Amnon raped Tamar. Solomon had multiple wives.
3. Questions are raised by what we have studied. Not the least of which is how these rules are carried over into the N.T. What are the implications for our lives as the people of God today? The second part of this lesson will address more of this.
4. The people of God have a moral responsibility to discipline themselves in a way that is reflective of their unique relationship to their God.
5. We are called to come out and be separate.

In this next section of our study consideration will be given to 1 Cor. 6:9-7:40.

II. Other than Lev. 18, 1 Cor. 6:9-7:40 is our single most complete biblical discourse on human sexuality.

- A. It begins with a contrast between the unrighteousness associated with the culture of the world and contrasts it with the culture of the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11).
  1. This is similar to Lev. 18:1-5 which contrasted the culture of the people of God and the people of the world as represented by Egypt and Canaan.
  2. The emphasis on these cultural differences is striking in this text. In 1 Cor. 5 Paul had said, "There is immorality among you of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife" (1).

- a. Even among the people of the world such practices are considered inappropriate.
  - b. The O.T. prohibited such incestuous relationships. Evidently such prohibitions are carried over into the N.T. period. Are all O.T. sexual regulations carried over into the N.T. period??
  - c. Paul condemns this practice as violating the Corinthian's calling out of the world and into special relationship with God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2). It is a violation of who they are.
  - d. The person who has done this wickedness can no longer be considered among the people of God (1 Cor. 5:9-13) . . . unless he repents (2 Cor. 2:5ff).
- B. Heading the list of actions associated with the culture of the world is "fornication" (1 Cor. 6:9).
1. It is a translation of a word in the Greek word family "porneia." Craig Blomberg (NIVAC, 126) says, "This is the broadest term for sexual sin in the Greek language, embracing any form of intercourse between two individuals who are not united in heterosexual marriage."
  2. Adultery, effeminate and homosexual behaviors are encompassed within this.
  3. Why do these head the list of behaviors associated with the culture of the world? Is it because of the intense severity of these violations (cf. Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:8-10)?
  4. Notice the word "idolaters" sandwiched in amongst these words. Does this word identify these sexual practices as behaviors associated with those "not separated apart to God?" That would be my conclusion!
  5. But the Corinthians had been washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His sacrifice paid the penalty for their sins and now they were separated apart, joined to God ("in holy matrimony").
- C. Paul argues that the body is for the Lord (1 Cor. 6:13c).
1. Although marriage is not specifically mentioned it is in the imagery.
  2. Your bodies are members of Christ, he says.
  3. Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?
  4. He speaks of joining oneself to the Lord and of being one spirit with Him.
  5. Upon this basis he says, "Flee from immorality."
  6. You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. You are not your own. You are bought with a price. Therefore you are to glorify God in your body.
- D. It is against this backdrop that Paul in chapter 7 addresses the application to the circumstances specifically among the Christians at Corinth. Five major considerations emerge.
1. Marriage is the discipline that God has given (1-6).
  2. The unmarried state is good if one has the self-control necessary to maintain it (7).
  3. The design is for the married to stay married.
    - a. If both are believers they should stay married (10-11).
    - b. If a believer is married to an unbeliever they too should stay married (12-16).
    - c. His summary (17-20).
  4. Regarding virgins, Paul says, in light of the "present distress" it is good to

- remain single, but marriage is an alternative (25-38).
5. Paul addresses widowhood in verses 39-40.
    - a. Observe that lifelong heterosexual monogamy is the design.
    - b. A wife is bound as long as her husband lives, he says.
    - c. When death occurs she is free to be married “only in the Lord.” I take that to be among the covenant people of God. Why would she want to be joined with a person of the world?
    - d. Paul’s judgment is that she is happier if she remains single. He enlarges on this teaching in 1 Tim. 5:11-15 by recommending marriage for younger widows “feeling sensual desires.”

III. What do we take away from having examined these two major texts of Scripture regarding sexual behavior among the people of God?

- A. Our special relationship to God governs our sexual behavior.
  1. This unique and special relationship is the foundation of all behavior among the people of God. Sexual behavior is just one of life’s areas governed by God.
  2. We are different from the world in this area NOT because we are inherently better or superior but because we have the gift of relational instruction.
- B. The basics taught in the O.T. are the foundation of what is taught in the N.T.
  1. Life long marriage between a man and a woman is commended as legitimate sexual expression and all other relationships illegitimate (Heb. 13:6).
  2. Incest, fornication, adultery, homosexual sex, bi-sexuality, bestiality, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, etc. are all associated with the culture of the world and violate the principles of God.
- C. We are vexed by the ungodly lifestyles of the idolaters of the world. We may be vexed but we should not be surprised, nor should we become participators with them (Rom. 2:1; 1 Pet. 4:1ff).
  1. The people of the world reason that premarital sex, extramarital sex, homosexual sex and the like are legitimate. Such is the culture of those we are not joined to God. They listen to sources of information that advocate such practices.
  2. Ladies and gentlemen it is not about genetics. It is not about environment. Although such factors may have an impact. It is about who we consider as authoritative. If there is a connection between genetics and one’s sexual desires it would not change a thing. It is not about genetics. It is about our source of information. If I am genetically predisposed to be heterosexual that does not make heterosexual incest right. It does not make fornication right.
  3. The issue is who are we? Are we the people of God or the people of the world? You can choose to identify with the world or you can choose to identify with the Lord? The question is the same no matter what sexual desires you may have.
- D. Violations of God’s injunctions can be forgiven.
  1. Violation is different than abandonment.
  2. The people of the world are not the only ones who violate God’s injunctions. Cf. 1 Cor. 5.

3. There is no justification for hate crimes against sexual sin, homosexual or heterosexual!
  4. Every person is created in the image of God and is to be respected and honored as inherently valuable. This does not mean our behaviors are always right.
- E. What ought we to do?
1. Preach the gospel and persuade men to turn to the Lord.
  2. We need to be troubled by the sin in the world, sexual and otherwise.
  3. The answer is not simply to preach against sexual sin and other moral issues!
  4. The answer is to preach the gospel and persuade men to turn to the Lord.
  5. When the people of the world become the people of God everything changes.
- F. We are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,” NOT because we are better than, but because our God is! He called us out of darkness and made us His people. We are His people by receiving His mercy and so we proclaim His excellencies and persuade others to be transformed!!!

Conclusion:

1. Who do you choose to be identified with?
2. The world?
3. The God of heaven?
4. Once that choice is made let your behavior reflect your relationship with Him.