

FØRBIDDEN TOPICS

BIBLE LESSONS THAT WILL GET YOU
CRITICIZED, CALLED-OUT, [REDACTED] OR CANCELLED.

MIKE MAZZALONGO

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14998 E. Reno

Choctaw, Oklahoma 73020

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1.

Mercy Killing or Selective Killing?

In a documentary I once saw on TV concerning assisted suicide, a man traveled to Switzerland to engage a Swiss group to assist in his own death.

- He was an engineer in his late sixties with Parkinson's disease.
- He was lucid, in control of his mind, but not able to walk without help.
- He spoke intelligently about his wish to end his life, without regrets not wanting to suffer his disease any longer.
- The interviewer asked him about life after death and he said he didn't believe in it.
- He had small reservations but these were not serious enough to stop him.
- One hour after the interview he was dead from a drug administered to him by the assisted suicide group, and it was all legal!

As more and more countries (including many state governments in the U.S.) are drafting laws on this issue I thought it would be good to get a Biblical view.

EUTHANASIA

If you want to make something acceptable that has traditionally been rejected by society, simply give it a new sounding name:

- Abortion/Infanticide changed to "Pregnancy Termination"
- Child Molesters call themselves "Man-Boy Love Society"
- Suicide is now referred to as Euthanasia which means "good death," or mercy killing, dignity in dying, etc.

In its present usage the term Euthanasia means to act directly to assist in the death, as painlessly as possible, for one who is suffering an incurable disease or lingering illness which, in the opinion of the ill or their supporters, makes life not worth living.

We need to make the difference between Euthanasia and the right a person has to choose a natural death.

1. Natural death is where long-term comatose patients being artificially sustained are removed from their life sustaining equipment.

Natural death is an agreement between the doctors and patients not to take any extraordinary measures to prolong a person's life, when all reasonable expectation of recovery is no longer present.

Laws already exist that give doctors and patients the right to make decisions concerning their legal right to have a natural death if this is what their families and doctors have decided. For example, the removal of life support when no potential for recovery is determined (allowing the person to die naturally). Other examples include:

- The refusal of extensive treatments when the rate of success for these is very small.
- The choice to have several months of reasonable health over years of suffering with on going cancer treatment.

We are all going to die at some point and we should have a choice to experience our death when it is imminent. In most states there are specific documents that record our wishes in this area (i.e. Advanced Health Care Directive).

2. Euthanasia or Mercy Killing is where someone kills you or helps you kill yourself with poisons or drugs.

Euthanasia is not the acceptance of an unavoidable, impending death – it is the imposition of death to end suffering. For example:

- Alzheimer patients who kill themselves rather than allowing the Alzheimer or other conditions to end their lives.
- Arthritis sufferers who ask someone to end their lives because they can no longer deal with the pain.

Euthanasia is the willful act that causes the immediate death of the individual. There is a difference between allowing a person to die naturally or letting the body shut down by itself, and actually causing that person's death using artificial means.

HISTORY / BACKGROUND

Suicide is nothing new, the Greek philosophers considered it a most noble way to die. The Japanese in WWII and many radical Muslim groups today see suicide as a useful tool in war encouraging young suicide bombers with the promise that upon completion of their missions they will go straight to their form of paradise. In the West, however, suicide, under any of its names, has become an acceptable option to resolve difficult issues as the value of human life has gone down. In pagan nations suicide was a convenient and honorable way to avoid the unpleasantness of old

age or public disgrace. Since it was believed that the present life was the only life one had, once it became unpleasant the easy option was simply to end it.

Believers, however, have always put the highest premium on human life for several reasons:

- It was created in the image of God – Genesis 1:26
- God expressly forbids murder and this includes suicide – Exodus 20
- The Hebrews, who had their share of suffering, nevertheless abhorred the taking of one's own life.
- Christians, who suffered tremendous persecution and torment throughout history, never considered suicide as an option – for the same Biblical reasons.

Suicide was never an acceptable option for Western society based on Judeo-Christian ethics. Those who committed this were considered insane or hopelessly depressed. Roman Catholics refused burial in their cemeteries those who had committed suicide. Even Insurance companies refused to pay policies for such deaths under the violent death clause, considering suicide a form of murder, disqualifying the person from collecting death benefits.

The idea of self-inflicted death or mercy killing, by another name, gained support as our society moved away from its Christian roots:

- People began to accept the evolutionary theory of life where there is no God but only an ever-evolving species of life on earth. If man is composed of nothing more than matter, then the way he dies has no meaning other than the normal cycle of life and death of all matter.

- Philosophers in the 19th century and the early 20th century began to teach that the only value of life is what that life produces and experiences.
- Art, music, success, sex, fame, power, and knowledge to name a few are the things that determined the value of one's life. A life that could not produce or consume these things was considered to be less valuable.

Therefore, we have arrived at the beginning of the 21st century and have a society that sees man as nothing more than an intelligent animal, and life valued only by what one has experienced or contributed to the rest of society:

- If you are intelligent, creative, and wealthy your life is valuable.
- If you are poor, sick, and uneducated your life is not very valuable.

I'm generalizing here for the sake of time, and space, but this is essentially the thinking that permits people to support and promote Euthanasia as a viable option to deal with illness and suffering. Of course, it does deal with suffering and pain, there's no question of this; also, there's no question that many do it out of concern; our objection is to the method, not the motivation. If life is valued by what you experience and contribute rather than what you are, then if you are no longer able to contribute because of illness or age, your life is no longer as valuable as it once was and you should be able to end it in whatever way you want.

Of course, this thinking reverts back to various forms of atheism (i.e. materialism, communism, etc.) because it eliminates God as a factor in life and death and judges the value of a person's life only based on physical criteria.

- What a person experiences sensually (including the experience of pain).

- What a person contributes physically, philosophically, and artificially are referred to as the "quality of life" and if your quality is below par, you should end it.

How many times have I heard people say, "She has no quality of life, why not just end it?" in speaking of the old, the sick or the handicapped.

THE DANGER OF EUTHANASIA

The idea of Euthanasia under any name is dangerous for several reasons:

1. It reduces the value of life.

Life is more than what we feel or produce, life is who we are, what we represent and in whose image we are made. The basis of our culture has been that every life may have different gifts and abilities, but each was equally valuable because of its spiritual nature. It has been this belief that has motivated advances in medicine, as well as all the helping professions.

When each life is equally valuable, regardless of color, age, deformity, or illness - we have the motivation to care for and feel right about ministering to everyone with an equal effort. If the intrinsic value of life is reduced and measured only by experience and productivity it will create an elitist society where, like animals, only the fittest will survive and only the fittest will be allowed or encouraged to survive.

2. Mercy Killing Leads to Selective Killing

When society justifies the concept of mercy killing (i.e. an incredibly suffering woman is put out of her misery by an overdose of pain medicine), then it is only a step to add new categories for this solution that we would have never dreamed of before.

Abortion is a form of mercy killing. We destroy the baby to save the mother the suffering of having another child, or having the child of a rapist, or giving birth to a sick or handicapped baby. If you kill the unborn

and those who no longer enjoy life because of illness, it is only a step to eliminate the elderly, the severely handicapped, the mentally insane, criminals, eventually even those people who don't agree with you.

The real danger is that once society accepts this behavior, the government will legislate and control it. It would be more cost effective to eliminate all the people I've just mentioned than to actually care for them. This is one of the potential problems that arise when governments start to have exclusive authority over medical care.

People think this is an exaggeration but who would have thought that we would be passing laws encouraging homosexual education in our schools and giving them rights to adopt children, 20 years ago? In the last decade we have accepted homosexuality as normal and now the government is writing laws for them. In the following decades many who are reading this book will be the ones who will be in the last years life and at the rate our society is changing it is not impossible to imagine the government giving doctors the right to eliminate those who are no longer useful to a progressive society. That would be us!

Martin Niemoller, a Lutheran Minister who was imprisoned and killed by the Nazis wrote of the danger of not confronting evil. He said,

"In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak because I was not a communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up."

3. Euthanasia Violates God's Word

God's Word is very clear about the proper treatment of human beings and how He will deal with those who violate His Word. The entire matter is summarized in two of His commands:

A. Thou shalt not kill. Exodus 20:13; Romans 13:9

- Human life is created in God's image, He gives life and takes it away (Job 1:21).
- Man is authorized to take life to protect society (Romans 13:4).
- This is the only time (police, armies, etc.).
- Man has no God given right to cause death to anyone!
 - unborn - old
 - rich - sick

When a person does this, for whatever reason, that person will answer to God (regardless of what human laws say) and it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

B. "...however you want people to treat you, so treat them..." Matthew 7:12

If you are ill, poor, old, handicapped, insane or suffering would you want the powers that be to eliminate you because you are no longer productive, or because you can no longer enjoy a football game?

The Bible is filled with admonitions on how to treat people in various situations of age and suffering:

- Provide for widows and orphans – James 1:27
- Respect and honor the aged – Leviticus 19:39
- Plead the cause of the poor and oppressed – Isaiah 1:11
- The strong are to help the weak – Romans 15:1
- We are to be good to all men (includes everybody) – Galatians 6:10
- Honor parents (even when old) – Ephesians 6:2

- Bear the burdens of those who struggle (for whatever reason) – Galatians 6:2
- Pray for those who are sick – James 5:14

Nowhere in the Bible does God give us a command, example or logical conclusion that to end someone's life is the solution to their suffering of mental or physical pain. On the contrary, suicide is always seen in a negative light (i.e. Saul, Judas) committed by those who had lost faith. Mercy killing may be an easy solution for society and a quick end for an individual, but it is a shortsighted action that disregards the warning that *"...it is given to men to die once, and then comes judgement."* (Hebrews 9:27).

The mercy killers not only hasten death but hasten God's judgment upon themselves.

- Dr. Kevorkian, an American doctor who practiced Euthanasia, was acquitted for his "mercy killings" in man's court, but he still has to be judged in God's court.
- Dr. Morgentaler, a famous abortionist in Canada received the "Order of Canada" (Canada's highest civil honor) but won't be honored by God for what he's done.

SUMMARY

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church about death and in his letter he said, "I do not want you to be uninformed...as do the rest who have no hope" (I Thessalonians 4:13). No hope when facing death. In death or life, in triumph or tragedy, the difference is that some have faith and hope, and others do not. Suicide makes sense if there is no God, no heaven, no judgement or no tomorrow. If this is all there is and all you have is pain and sorrow, ending it quickly and painlessly makes sense.

But for those who have faith in Christ and a hope for an eternal tomorrow, there are three promises to help us face suffering and death:

1. God promises that He will listen when we put our sorrows upon Him in prayer. He will support us when we are down.

...casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
- I Peter 5:7

2. God promises that no temptation (this includes a trial of suffering of any kind) will be greater than you can bear. Don't be afraid of not being able to bear it, you will with his help.

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.
- I Corinthians 13:13

3. God assures us that He will never leave us, this includes our moment of death. We won't be alone, no matter what.

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you".
- Hebrews 13:5

These promises and assurances prepare us to meet every suffering and every challenge. With God, we can even face our deaths with confidence knowing that we can put our lives into His hands until it's time for us to leave.

The pagan, the doubter and the unbeliever has no hope, and killing himself or another may seem merciful. However, for us as Christians, the only option is to put our lives and the lives of our loved ones into the hands of a merciful God:

- Who will comfort the heart
- Limit the suffering
- Receive us into heaven when His will is completely served

Jesus could have chosen mercy killing in order to avoid the suffering of the cross, but He looked ahead to the glorious resurrection for Himself and for all those who would believe in Him.

To those who believe, I encourage you to keep your faith in God and He will sustain you and those you love through the trials of suffering and death to the eternal life in heaven He has promised to all those who are faithful.

2. Superstition, Astrology and the Occult

It is estimated that 80% of the population in America know their astrological sign.

- In the sixties one of the most popular songs was a number with astrological significance – "It is the dawning of the age of Aquarius..."
- Of course, most people of the era didn't know what that title meant. We liked the song for its melody, however, for those in the "know" Aquarius was not only the name of a constellation of stars, not only the eleventh sign of the zodiac, but the code name for those who practiced various forms of occultism (Aquarians).
- I use the word occult because it is a general term (meaning hidden, mysterious, supernatural) that includes a variety of practices and beliefs such as astrology, fortune telling, satanism, witchcraft, magic, demon-possession and spiritism to name a few of the occult arts.
- Occult practices are as old as Satan, however they have gained an unprecedented following here in the United States and Canada in

the last fifty years where occultism is no longer practiced only in secrecy but has spread into every area of our everyday lives.

- As Christians, we need to be able to recognize occult practices when we see them and know what the Scriptures teach about such things so that we can avoid being influenced by this evil and denounce it as such when necessary.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Most people want to have a "spiritual" or "religious" experience in life --- it is their answer to the beckoning finger of death. Karl Barth, a famous theologian, once said, "Death is the birth pang of faith." In our country this "spiritual" experience that individuals seek usually takes one of three forms.

A. Church type of Spiritual Experience

Formal organized religion with priests or ministers, that have a definite set of doctrines and support the existing social order. This describes most standard religious groups, especially those who identify with Christianity.

B. Sect Type

These voluntarily reject any compromise with the world and denounce most standard "church type" religions and make a point of it. Sectarians seek individual perfection and high levels of spiritual experience on their own (i.e. Mennonites, J.W.).

C. Cult Type

This group is characterized by mysticism in its ritual and mode of thinking. People in this group seek a self-fulfilling religious experience usually provided by the mystic element within the cult. It is within this grouping that we find most "occult" practices happening - since most are based on information derived from occult sources.

Dr. L. McMillian in his book "Doctrines of Demons" lists some of the main features of the cultic religions:

1. They usually center on a strong personality.

A founder who has vision, mystical abilities, or claims to be able to lead his/her disciples to higher levels of spiritual experience.

2. They react strongly against Orthodoxy (a set of doctrines that can be verified).

They reject normal standards of religion. Truth is available to only a select few of those who have been properly initiated. Truth is a "hidden" thing.

3. Cultic teaching reflects "success" orientation.

These adherents hold an evolutionary view of man and teach that adherence will produce better or "super" people. All abilities come through a re-training of the mind, possibly through access to the mystic powers or the mystic system provided to them by the leaders.

4. Mystic Fellowship with super-human helpers.

There is the belief that there are masters, gods or other beings that assist humans in achieving newer and higher levels of spiritual awareness. The work of leaders is to be channels or communicators for these.

5. Belief in healing powers.

Power to heal the body and mind is a way of verifying the total system of belief to the devotee. The ability to heal confirms the doctrine.

6. Physic powers often designate the elite.

Mastery of secret knowledge produces physic powers unavailable to outsiders or casual members. Encouragement to total devotion is required to access more power.

7. Belief in ceremonial magic.

The goal is transformation to the highest state of being, and quite often magic is a means to gain mental concentration (magic and its practice will be discussed later).

8. Syncretism of religions and philosophies

These groups include features and teachings from every philosophy and type of religion.

9. Cultic groups appeal to individuals, not families.

These groups exploit the fragmentation of family in order to influence those who are lonely, unfulfilled and directionless. We can see that some of these features have permeated into more "church type" religions or organizations. For example:

- Strong leader, healing, syncretism (Unitarian Church), appeal to those who are above (spirits and angels), sanctification and success go hand in hand (success gospel).

There was a time when every major newspaper carried a daily horoscope. There were approximately 10,000 full-time astrologers in the USA (more astrologers than preachers). Occult fairs, conventions and organizations with tax free status are plentiful. The Reddit/occult site alone has 1.5 million Facebook fans and 700,000 Twitter followers, and is ranked number 19! Today, we can easily obtain comic books, videos, games (Dungeons & Dragons), movies, music and books which feature occult themes and ideas.

The most visible gathering together of these practices in recent times was under the umbrella of what was called the New Age Movement which was a combination of eastern religion, occult philosophy and American marketing methods often mixed together under the banner of environmentalism. This movement was the greatest challenge to Christianity in the 1990s and at the beginning of the second Millennium.

Mystery, magic, astrology, and Satanism are present in every area of our lives and most of us tolerate some of it in our speech, reading or thinking habits without actually realizing it. Interest in the occult has only grown with the development of the internet which provides a platform for thousands of sites devoted to its practice.

OCCULT TYPES/PRACTICES

A. Astrology

The attempt to know the future course of events by observing and interpreting heavenly bodies. Astrology was an ancient art practiced almost 2000 years ago in Babylon. It was the Greeks who developed the idea of searching the stars for individual destinies.

Modern astrologers use the characteristics of each sign in the Zodiac, the position of planets in the solar system at the moment of birth, along with information from the "houses" (similar to signs) and this charts which area of our lives will be influenced by the planets. Horoscopes are the most popular form and practice of the occult today.

B. Fortune Telling (Divination)

Divination comes from the Latin word meaning "gift of prophecy." The term implies the ability to know, through some means (crystal ball, tarot cards, tea leaves, dice, palm reading) the events of the future. It is illegal in the U.S., so most get around this by claiming only to give advice. Spiritism/Spiritualism is in the same general area where a person is used as a "medium" to speak to the dead person to know secrets or the future.

C. Satanism

Two main forms of Satanism:

1. The actual worship of Satan as a powerful spirit god that grew out of a primitive worldview, Zoroastrianism. They believed that there existed two spirits (good and evil) and that the earth was created and dominated

by the evil spirit and thus the worship and cult of evil developed. Satanism in its many forms includes human and animal sacrifice as well as all forms of occult practice and mystic rituals. Those who seriously follow this belief system are very secretive about their involvement.

2. Popularization of Satan worship through "First Church of Satan" founded in 1966 by Anton LeVay. This and other groups (churches) such as church of evil, church of Satanic brotherhood don't actually believe in the existence of a Satan, but they use him as a symbol for their group that is dedicated to the worship of the flesh and not any spirit. Practices include orgies, magic, and other occult activities.

D. Witchcraft (comes from Celtic Word Wicca = wisdom)

Primitive witchcraft developed out of early society's worship of nature and the effort to control nature through the practice of religion combined with magic. Fertility was a common theme and the primary god was female, so witches tended to be used.

Modern witchcraft is still steeped in the concepts of the past but has taken on a more modern image and is more organized than before. "Halloween" witches are stereotypes that are far from the truth of what modern witchcraft is like. They have a distinct religion with deities (male deity represents death, the female deity represents life), churches (covens), rituals and a belief system, etc. The stated goal of witchcraft is spiritual fulfillment. This is interpreted as the full manifestation of the mystical powers within themselves and nature.

To achieve this includes what is called the "eightfold path" a series of activities that will help achieve fulfillment. Some of these are: meditation/dance/ fellowship/drinking of wine/flagellation/ ceremonial intercourse/ sacrifice of animals, incantations, etc.

E. Magic

Magic is the attempt to control or manipulate higher or unseen powers or beings through the use of objects, incantations, rituals, etc. Serious (not

show business) magicians strive for harmony between themselves and the mystical powers within nature in order to achieve the highest in self-fulfillment. Magic is an element used in many forms of occult practice.

F. Demon Possession

The invasion of a human being by an evil spirit or power. The New Testament attests to the reality of demon possession but most of our concepts about possession today are derived from superstitions in the Middle Ages and popularization of these through the media in the last 50 years.

(i.e. The Exorcist - a movie about a young girl possessed by an evil spirit and driven out by a priest performing the Roman Catholic right of exorcism).

In the Middle Ages, demon possession cases were closely associated with occult practices and witchcraft. Sociologists claim that so called demon-possession is reported most often in primitive pagan cultures but decreases dramatically as the level of civilization and education increases. Demon possession was mostly cited in ancient times to explain deviant behavior patterns. The state where one believed he was possessed was often enhanced through occult rights, the drinking of blood, taking drugs, etc.

We need to be able to tell the difference between possession which is actual invasion; and obsession which is a persistent or haunting thought or feeling that can be manufactured and once produced acts out like possession. A common symptom among those who suffer "obsessive syndrome" is the belief that one's being is being subdued by an alien or spirit being. A person's guilt may combine with deep fears of possession and produce a condition which resembles demon possession.

CAN PEOPLE BE POSSESSED TODAY? WHY?

No! Four Reasons:

1. Satan, the greatest of evil spirits has been bound according to the promise of Scripture.

- Zechariah 13:1-2 – the promise is that with the establishment of God's Kingdom there would be a curtailing of Satan's power.
- Luke 10:18; Luke 11:21-23; John 12:31 – Jesus accomplished this task and proved it by giving the power to do this to his disciples.
- Romans 8:38 – Nothing can separate us from God, no evil spirit can possess us.

2. Demonic possession ceased in the apostolic era. – Acts 5:16; 8:7; I Corinthians 12-14

In Acts we see Apostles using their spiritual gifts to confirm the gospel. Casting out demons was part of this. Persons already possessed at the crucifixion would remain so or could be healed by disciples. However, because of the victory of Christ at the cross over Satan, the power of possession ceased, there were no new victims. Jesus cast out Satan, the apostles healed in their time. There is no need for this gift today since possession is no longer possible. There may now be obsession, but the Word can deal with this.

3. Satan now works through deception – II Corinthians 11:13-14

We cannot be possessed, but we can be tricked, tempted and seduced into being obsessed – where the suffering is as great. It is possible, with God's help, to resist Satan's attacks (I Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7). We have the power to resist.

4. Modern demon possession can be clinically analyzed as emotional disturbances and treated.

1. Obsession with a compulsive type hallucination
2. Disassociation - multiple personality, one of which is a demon

3. Somnambulism – sleep walking syndrome
4. Contagion Syndrome – Mob influence. Most speaking in tongues is accomplished in this way.

A CHRISTIAN'S POSITION TOWARDS THE OCCULT

Forbidden by scripture for the following reasons:

1. A Form of idolatry

Depending on inanimate objects to manipulate God or to know the future is the sin of idolatry. It is degrading to God when we don't pray to Him but rather depend on things to comfort and guide us rather than on Him and His Word (things like stars, omens, spirits, rituals, etc).

People put much confidence in telepathy or spiritists in order to communicate with the dead. Many are paranoid that Satan or evil spirits can possess them or talk to them but Luke 16:26 (Lazarus and the rich man) shows that no one in the spirit world can communicate or possess someone in the physical world.

The only Spirit who can hear us to respond is God and the only way to communicate to Him is through prayer. The only way He communicates to us is through His Word (II Timothy 3:16). Any other manipulation or way to know is a form of idolatry and God will destroy the idolators.

2. Superstition is fatalistic

Superstition is based on the notion that all things are predetermined and all we can do is find out in advance what happens. Magic believes that the force in change of the universe can be manipulated to serve human will by pressing the right "buttons." Luck is the belief that circumstances are predestined to favor you. All of these practices are based on the notion of fatalism and are both vain and useless for the following reason.

A. We can change things since we have free will and access to God through prayer who works for our benefit. God knows the future because he is

eternal, but he doesn't create the future - we do this by our decisions. Fatalism is based on circular history. Movies and books about time warp, Back to the Future, and time machines are based on this. This is an inaccurate view of reality.

Truth is recorded in the Bible. Very simply said there is a beginning and an end.

- Genesis 1 – Beginning
- II Peter 3:10 – End

History, therefore, is linear not circular.

B. When good things happen to us, they are blessings from God. God blesses all people whether they recognize this or not. The fatalists gets no real joy from "luck", but he who knows the truth rejoices in his prosperity and knows where to go for help in times of trouble.

3. It is basically anti-Christian

Witchcraft, astrology, magic, etc. create and foster insecurity, fear and instability. These practices do not bring peace, joy and assurance. The occult is usually accompanied by what is unnatural, violent and death! It is against every notion and teaching of Christ and its roots are in darkness, mystery and untruth.

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed."

- Galatians 1:8-9

No matter how slick the presentation or nice looking the people, if you are anti-Christ you are pro-Satan and therefore doomed.

SUMMARY

The basic allure of the occult is that you will find out something which you didn't know about self, the future or the spirit world that will give you power or more meaning. Romans 16:25-27 tells us that the greatest of all mysteries has already been rewarded.

"Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen."

- Romans 16:25-26

The gospel reveals:

1. The meaning of life - To seek and find God (John 17:3)
2. The true self - Lost sinners (Romans 3:23; 6:23)
3. The person of God - Through Jesus Christ (John 14:8-9)
4. True Spirituality – Walking in the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23)
5. The future – The return of Christ (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Exhortation:

1. We must get rid of these dangerous habits, books, etc. that have occult content and protect our children (Acts 19:19).
2. Stay with the Word as your only guide (II Timothy 3:16).

3.

The 4 Phases of Addiction

DEALING WITH ADDICTION - PART 1

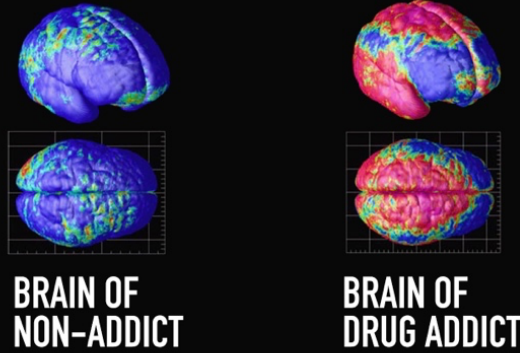
In the next three chapters we will be dealing with addictions in general. In this chapter I want to examine addictions from a physical and psychological perspective.

- What they are
- How we become addicted
- The effects of addiction once they take hold

In subsequent chapters we'll see what the Bible says about addictions, their consequences and how God helps us avoid them or deal with them if they take hold of us. Hopefully, this information will give us both insight and warning about the power that various substances have to control and destroy our lives.

ADDICTION

In the last several years there has been a lot of research done on the causes and effects of various addictions on humans. Using modern MRI technology, scientists are able to see the actual reaction that the brain has when it is stimulated by various effects (like music or visual images) as well as chemicals (i.e. illegal drugs).



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In this type of research scientists have identified neural circuits that are involved in the interaction of the brain with every known illicit drug and have specified common pathways that are affected by such substances.

This means that all illegal drugs have a similar effect on the brain that can actually be seen in an x-ray. You can put up the view of an MRI (x-ray) of a non-drug user's brain next to that of an addict and can easily tell the difference. Researchers are now able to indicate elements that are common to all addictions regardless of the substance used. This has led many scientists (including Dr. Alan Leshner, former Director of the National Drug Institute in the U.S.) to declare that "drug addiction is a brain disease."

From a Biblical perspective, we can expect that many things that are considered sinful such as immoral sex, drunkenness, pride etc. can easily evolve to a point where they incapacitate the body as illness. For example:

- The disease of AIDS is not a sin in itself, but the leading method of transmitting AIDS (sex between men) is a sin (Romans 1:27).
- The disease of addiction is not a sin in itself but the abuse of alcohol or certain drugs leading to addiction is.
- Being delusional or depressed is not a sin but unrestrained pride and overestimation of our self-worth that often causes these emotional problems are.

I say this because many Christians don't make a distinction between the cause (many times, but not always - sin) and the effect (many times but not always - disease). For example:

- Some people get AIDS from an infected blood transfusion.
- Some have an addictive personality disorder caused solely by their brain composition and not because they have abused something.
- On the other hand some abuse something because they have emotional disorders. People who suffer from depression often self-medicate to ease their suffering and become addicted as a result.

These few examples demonstrate that we have to be very careful when we label something as sinful.

In this first section, therefore, we will study addictions as diseases, and in the next we'll examine the pathways that often lead to addiction and what the Bible says about these.

HOW WE BECOME ADDICTED

Part of the research on addiction is charting the common elements that lead to all addictions. Here are the four phases in the progression of addiction.

Phase #1 – Learning the Mood Swing

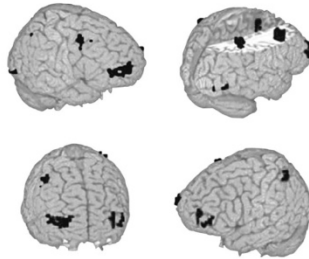
When it comes to addiction, learning is accomplished experientially, not intellectually. Addiction is learned instinctively, intuitively, spontaneously, and naturally. And so, we become addicted to something using our instincts, intuition, and natural feelings. The first phase in addiction, therefore, is that we "learn" certain things:

A. We learn that certain chemicals produce euphoria.

Euphoria is a "feeling" of some kind that changes our state of mind.

- It is always beyond natural feelings.
This is why it is called a "high".
- The words used to describe the feelings we experience are, "Very happy, very relaxed, very excited, very confident, etc."
- The feeling is real, but that reality is exaggerated.

This is where the MRI's come in. They can track which part of the brain is being affected by the substance a person is taking and how the brain is reacting. In the MRI below, the dots represent the chemical THC found in cannabis products. We note that the THC is spreading to different parts of the brain affecting both sensory and motor skills.



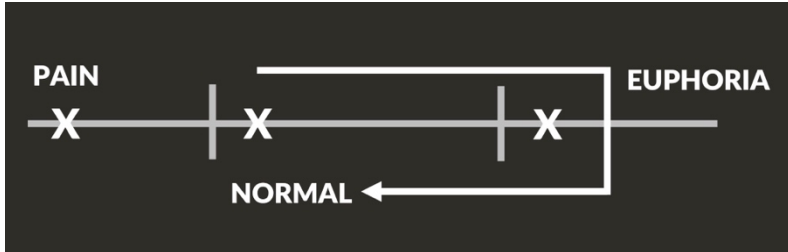
Cermak, T. (2020). *The Science of Marijuana and the Brain*.
In *From Bud to Brain: A Psychiatrist's View of Marijuana* (pp. 1-136). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

B. We learn that the degree of euphoria is determined by the quantity ingested.

- Too much – bad high/sick
- Too little – No high/euphoria

C. Key Lesson Learned - Phase #1

We learn to trust chemicals and their effects because they work every time. It doesn't always happen the first time we try a substance but with repeated use we eventually "learn" (intuitively, naturally) this lesson.



This is what Phase #1 looks like on a chart.

- The x in the middle is normal state/on the left is pain/on the right is euphoria.
- Note that addictions occur when we go from "normal" to "euphoria".

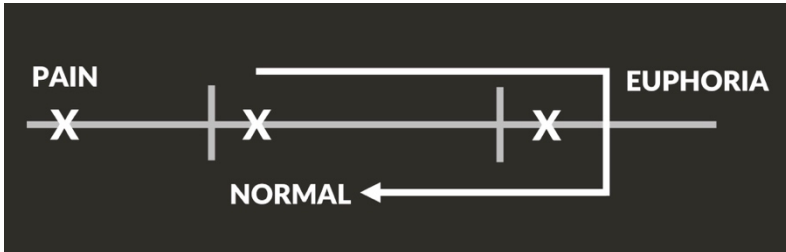
The meds that you take when in legitimate pain do not become addictive if you stop using them when the pain stops. People become addicted to pain killers because when they return to "normal" they begin to use them to create euphoria instead of going from pain to normal. As long as the medication takes you from pain to normal you're not learning addiction – this is why you should take your pain medications regularly when sick or injured.

Phase #2 – Seeking the Mood Swing

Once you've "learned" to trust chemicals to change your mood, you have moved to the second phase of addictions where you are now actively seeking the mood swing. This phase has its own progress:

- A. You begin using chemicals at appropriate times and places (parties, to relax, etc.)

- B. You learn to control the quality and outcome of the chemical using experiences (avoid overuse, hangovers, illness, etc.). Keeping things under control, remaining "highly functional" while using,
- C. Social users remain in this phase. Most people think they can remain indefinitely in this phase.



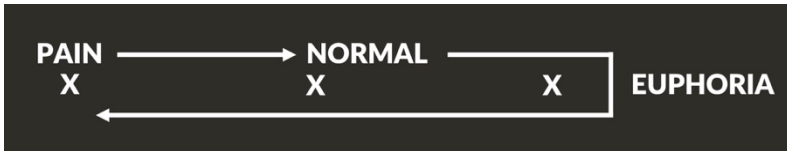
This is Phase #2 on the chart. Note that it looks like #1 because it is reinforcing the lesson "learned" in Phase #1 – this "works" for me.

Phase #3 – Chemical Dependence

There's no time frame between Phase #2 and Phase #3. Events, our own character, or the repetition of our consumption eventually lead to Phase #3. You know you're there because like Phase #1 and #2, Phase #3 has its own markers which include:

- A. You have a growing anticipation and preoccupation with chemical use. More time is spent thinking and worrying about not having access.
- B. Your lifestyle begins to change and revolve around chemical use.
- C. You begin to lose control over the times and amount of use (i.e. begin to use at work or use too much).
- D. Usage begins to promote behavior that violates your personal value system (i.e. steal to use; immoral while using).

- E. You adopt a user peer group that accepts this behavior. This allows negative feelings about self to grow without being identified or addressed. No one in the user's circle will challenge the bad behavior.
- F. You learn to rationalize and suppress feelings, and Begin to be separate/alone.
- G. You project self-hatred on to others and have conflicts with family members.
- H. Your higher tolerance of chemicals leads to more ingenious ways to obtain and use them. This leads to various "Rituals" of drug taking and experimentation with type and quantity.
- I. Your health, as well as emotional and spiritual stability, begin to deteriorate.



The chart for Phase #3 shows that the user has shifted his "normal" state from normal to pain. There is pain without chemicals, so the pattern now begins at pain, moves to Euphoria and then back to pain not normalcy. There is pain and a high with a stop at normal. This is the point where you're losing your job, family and friends because of your dependency.

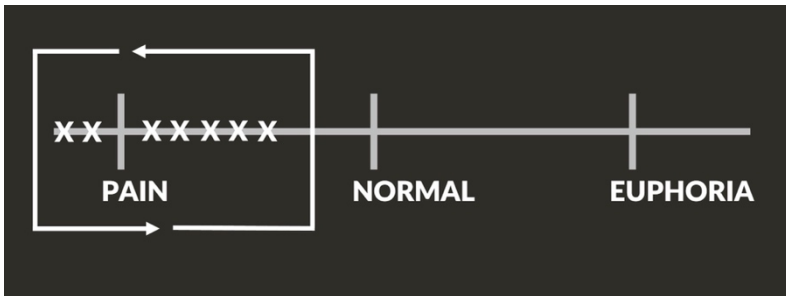
Phase #4 - Addiction

People who are "dependent" need chemicals to function normally. Addicts need chemicals to stay alive and sane. Some of the markers for full-blown addiction.

- A. Using to feel normal. Addicts cannot get to the Euphoria anymore; they use to stop the self-induced pain caused by chemical abuse. This is different than the true and natural pain

caused by a broken ankle for example. The addict's pain is caused by chemical abuse.

- B. There is withdrawal when the chemical is withheld. An addict feels pain because there is no infusion of chemical. The withdrawals include nausea, sweats, blackouts, paranoia and psychological pain.
- C. Users seek to escape the pain by changing location, moving.
- D. Addicts experience a loss of desire to live and complete spiritual bankruptcy.
- E. Addicts become fatalists thinking that there is no way out so I might as well use.



This is a chart for Phase #4. Note there is no euphoria, only pain and a false normalcy. According to research on the subject, addiction is the final step in a process where one "learns" to use various substances in order to affect the brain in altering one's perception of reality, or what is "normal."

ACTIVITIES AND PERSONALITY ADDICTIONS

People who are addicted change their activities and their personalities. For example, things like:

- Paranoia – natural fear/suspicion.
- Depression – feelings of loss, self-hatred.
- Narcissism – relationship with the chemical becomes more important than all other relationships.
- Intimacy – the inability to form or maintain intimate relationships.
- Risk-Taking – taking chemicals to induce euphoria is risky. Maintaining the habit provides excitement. Going without chemicals seems boring.
- Authority – Addicts reject every type of authority. Authority opposes their continued use of chemicals.
- Morality – The need for drugs is stronger than the need to love or do right.

Discouraging as these traits may be, those who work with addicts and study their behavior say that many of these personality characteristics and activities are caused by a person's use of drugs. The good news is that these traits can be reversed with the withdrawal from chemical abuse.

SUMMARY

This has been a brief introduction to the subject of addiction: What causes it; How it progresses; What effects it has on us. In the next chapter we will examine why people begin to abuse chemicals, what the Bible says about this issue and how to both avoid and recover from addiction.

4.

The Bible and Addiction

DEALING WITH ADDICTION - PART 2

Let us review what we've learned so far.

1. There are addictive substances which are categorized this way for a reason.
2. All drugs have an effect on the individual to one degree or another.
 - They speed you up making you think you are stronger, faster, smarter, etc.
 - They slow you down and make everything feel in control, pleasant, relaxed.
 - They change your perception of reality, time and self-awareness.
3. Regardless of the drug, addictive substances have various things in common:
 - If you take them into your body, you will pay a price which is usually negative (MRI scans show the true negative impact).
 - Some medications help solve problems if taken correctly but there are always side effects.
 - All recreational drugs have long term negative effects on the person using them.

- Drugs are addictive. This is why they are usually controlled or outlawed.
- An addiction is when your need for the drug is greater than your ability to reject it.

In this chapter we are going to talk more about addictions in general and also see what the Bible teaches on this subject.

ADDICTION

The dictionary defines "addiction" as a strong habit, but it doesn't explain how that habit starts and grows.

1. Types of Addictions

There are two groups of addictions:

A. Substance addictions

This is where the substance ingested has an ingredient that creates an addiction in the user. We learned previously that the path to addiction has four stages:

1. Learn mood swing
2. Seek mood swing
3. Dependent on the substance for normalcy
4. Addicted to the substance to control the pain caused by the substance.

B. Psychological addictions

These are just as strong but are more complicated to understand. In a psychological addiction there is something about you (the way you think, the experiences you've had) that make ordinary things addictive for you

(i.e. Cigarettes have nicotine and anyone who smokes, or chews tobacco become addicted).

Food is not addictive in itself, however, for some people, because of the way they are, food becomes an addiction. They either can't stop eating it or they can't make themselves eat it.

With psychological addictions there are all kinds of things people can be addicted to - T.V., video games, certain kinds of people, shopping, hoarding things, sexual images, etc.

2. Causes of Addiction

There are many reasons why people become addicted psychologically or to substances physically:

A. Substance Addictions

- Curiosity – They want to see what it's like
- Peer pressure – They want to fit in /get talked into it
- Ignorance/Immaturity – They don't believe the danger
- Depression – Unhappiness for some reason or other makes them try drugs to ease the pain (Self-medication).

B. Psychological Addictions

- Self-image – we see ourselves as we really are
- Anger – Repressed angry feelings make us hurt ourselves. Many angry, frustrated people use porn, cutting or burning self as an outlet.
- Low self-esteem – we don't like ourselves, so we lock into addictive behavior

- Fixation – we fixate or hero worship a person or thing and begin a repetitive mode of behavior. For example, a girl who is fixated on a model who is very skinny and tries, to her detriment, to look like her by not eating even though she is built quite differently.
- There are many other triggers for various types of psychological addiction including fear, abuse, depression and confusion to name a few.

3. Steps to Addiction

There are many different types of addictions but the way one becomes addicted is similar. I listed the steps to the psychological process, now we'll examine the personal process.

A. Ingestion

We take into our bodies a substance that has addictive properties. We eat it, see it with our eyes (porn), smoke it, pick up an emotional habit (in psychological addictions). Any way you do it, an addictive thing gets into you.

B. Infatuation

Once it's inside (like a virus) it, meaning the chemical or habit, begins to send a signal to your brain that basically says, "Repeat this process because..."

- This feels good
- This works for me
- This solves the problem

C. Infection

When we obey the demands of the substance to repeat the process of ingesting or continuing the habit, the repetition of it makes the virus send another message to the brain, "Continue repeating because..."

- I need this
- I must have this

D. Imprisonment

When the addiction is firmly ingrained and you are ingesting and/or repeating the action as a habit, then the virus sends its final message to the brain, "Continue repeating because..."

- I can't live without this

The goal of the addiction virus is to 1) control you 2) dominate you 3) kill you. People have known this for a long time, this is why addictive drugs are either illegal to possess or controlled by law for medical distribution. Addictions can destroy peoples lives. This is why we must be very careful when handling them medically or completely reject them when offered to us for recreational use.

THE BIBLE AND ADDICTION

As Christians we don't need the Bible to see the danger of addiction because there is plenty of scientific evidence to demonstrate the terrible consequences associated with them. We do, however, need to know about the moral implications regarding the ingestion of things that may lead to addiction, and what the Bible has to say on this topic.

Of course, the Bible doesn't specifically name cigarettes or heroine or other modern addictive substances because these change throughout history, however, what remains the same is the problem of addiction. Human beings have become addicted to drugs, ideas, or people from the moment Adam sinned, therefore, God's Word has dealt with addiction, not just with the things people have become addicted to, throughout history.

The only drug the Bible even mentions is alcohol because it is the oldest. The first time a drug problem is mentioned in the Bible is when Noah gets drunk after leaving the ark. The Bible says that after he left the ark, he

planted a vineyard and drank of its wine. As a result, he became inebriated and went to sleep in his tent naked. This led to his son, Ham, mocking him and created a problem in his family.

Throughout the Bible the problem of drugs or addiction is dealt with by references to wine because it was the most widely used drug at the time.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT ADDICTION

When the Bible talks about addiction, it's talking about drug and alcohol problems.

"You shall have no other gods before Me."
- Exodus 20:3

Addiction is when some idea or substance controls or dominates you. God says that only He has the right to control and dominate you. Only He can be your God. The reasons for this are simple:

- A. God is the creator and worthy to be your leader, your God. Drugs are things, part of the earth. A human dominated by God is natural, orderly; a human dominated by a thing is not natural, it's undignified, like a dog walking a man on a leash.
- B. God wants to lead you to a life of happiness, fulfillment and eternal existence. Addictions lead to pain and death. Taking drugs, etc., violates the first commandment. It's a form of idolatry.
- C. God gives you life and all you have; He has a right to lead you. Addictions bring nothing but misery and death. Addictions are wrong because you replace God with a "thing".

¹ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the

renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- Romans 12:1-2

The purpose of our lives is to find God, serve God and honor Him with what we say and do. This means when people look at our lives they should be motivated to believe in God themselves or serve God more than before or say to God – you are wonderful if this is the kind of person that represents you. A person who is addicted doesn't motivate anyone towards God, there is nothing spiritual or Godly about someone who is a slave to something they smoke, look at, sniff, eat, think, or do to themselves, etc.

How many of you would take me seriously about anything I said, or how many of you would really make a great effort to become better Christians if you found out that I secretly was a heroin addict? The power of my influence over you for good is based on my ability to give a good example of freedom from addiction.

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- I Corinthians 6:19-20

People defend their addictions or experiments with drugs by saying that it's their life or their body, no one can tell them what to do with what belongs to them. The Bible, however, says that the body belongs to God, not us.

- He creates the soul and the body.
- He allows us to be born and come into being.
- He provides all that we need to live.
- He will judge us when we die.
- He will reward or punish us based on how we used every part of our bodies.

Drugs cause addiction and addictions cause loss of power, illness, and death. God didn't create our bodies for this kind of usage. Our job is to find out what God wants us to do with our bodies, minds, and talents, not to waste our lives on foolish and destructive addictions!

Our bodies are not ours to ruin!

SUMMARY

If someone says, "What does the Bible say about drugs?" your answer will be:

1. The Bible is against the use of illegal drugs because that behavior is illegal (Romans 13).
2. The Bible is against the use of illegal or legal drugs, used in the wrong way, because they lead to addiction.

I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

- I Corinthians 9:27

3. The Bible warns us against becoming addicted to anything because:
 - A. It replaces God in the number one position of your life, and this is idolatry.
 - B. Addictive behavior does not honor God and actually pushes people away from faith in God when they observe a person claiming to be a Christian but possessing a full-blown addiction.
 - C. Addiction uses the body for short term pleasure that leads to sickness and death. God did not intend for the body to be used in this way.

There is no place in the Bible where you will find a command that says "Thou shall not use any addictive substances." If there were we could not

in good conscience drink coffee or eat chocolate because these have caffeine and caffeine can be addictive. Rather, the Bible warns us against the dangers of addiction (calls it drunkenness, the addiction that comes from alcohol abuse); as well as illegal activity that leads to addiction. Science proves how destructive it is and how easy it is to go from experimentation to addiction. The Bible warns against behavior that will lead to addiction and why this will cause us to lose our souls (1 Corinthians 6:9).

5.

The Sobering Truth about Alcohol

DEALING WITH ADDICTION - PART 3

In this third chapter on the topic of addiction I'd like to talk about the substance that has addicted more people throughout history than any drug or pill - that would be alcohol.

Despite all the interest and increased use of marijuana, alcohol in its various forms is still the addictive substance most widely used all over the world and most often abused. Part of the reason for this is that it is legally obtainable and cleverly marketed as a positive lifestyle product. Commercials and ads for beer, for example, have a certain message or view about people who drink beer and not the beer itself. They rarely, if ever, say, "Drink our beer; or our beer is on sale - 15 cans for the price of 12."

The major marketing efforts for beer products promote ideas or images that imply or demonstrate that:

1. Beautiful, sharp, hip people drink beer (or wine, hard liquor, etc.).
2. Drinking is fun or it's what to do when you're having fun or want to have fun. This is why there are funny commercials about beer. I remember when I was using drugs I wouldn't go out to a party

or a club or concert without some form of drug with me because I thought it wouldn't be fun if I didn't get high. The drugs made everything better, or so I thought.

3. Another subtle message is that drinking doesn't make you drunk. Strange, but lots of beer commercials show people doing things requiring a clear mind (i.e. driving, skydiving, water skiing etc.). They never show a guy in his lazy boy with an empty six pack of beer dozing off during the Super Bowl.
4. One effective message is that you are desirable to women with a beer in your hand (or brandy or tequila, etc.). What makes you mature, sexy, worldly is that you consume alcohol without apology or negative effect.
5. Then there's the "recruitment" type ad which sells the idea that everybody drinks (men, women, older men, younger women). The point here is that you are on the outside of normal social interaction if you don't drink.

Of course, with the rise in alcohol addiction and death due to alcohol abuse, the marketing of alcohol changed to incorporate an additional message built around the theme of responsibility.

Now, therefore, we are "educated" via the new, more caring ads for alcohol which promote the following themes:

1. Drinking is acceptable, so long as you do it moderately.
2. Try to know why you drink: These are soft focused ads featuring a young person with their dad or other older and wiser characters.
3. Drinking alcohol is a mature thing meant for mature people. In other words, the ads went from drinking is for beautiful, sharp, dynamic people to drinking is for smart, mature successful people.

4. My personal favorite in these soft-sell type ads are the ones that promote the idea that manufacturers of alcoholic products actually care about people, the environment and the well being of society.

This last message is the most cynical and dishonest of all because alcohol has been an addictive curse on mankind going as far back as Noah 4,000 years before Christ. These deceptive messages are necessary to convince and encourage people to buy and use a product whose major active ingredient is the addictive substance of alcohol.

STATISTICS

The less flashy and alluring images about alcohol are found in the cold, hard statistics that reveal a much less shiny picture of the real-life effects on the people who use this substance in its various forms. There are all kinds of brands, drinks and mixtures but they all have a common denominator, they all include the addictive substance of alcohol as their basic ingredient.

Here are some of the latest statistics related to the use of alcohol and the negative outcome as a result.

1. Alcohol is an addictive substance. It works like other substances to addict and kill those who use it.
2. 28% of highway deaths are alcohol related.
3. 40% of all violent crime committed is by those under the influence of alcohol.
4. 12% of all teens are alcoholics.
5. 30% of all suicides committed are while under the influence of alcohol.
6. Alcohol consumption has been directly linked to cancer (mouth, liver, throat, lung).
7. 50% of domestic violence, child abuse, and drowning involve alcohol abuse.

8. Alcoholism costs the government \$175 billion a year to treat and deal with each year.
9. 1/3 of all prison inmates were drunk prior to or during the crime they committed.
10. Unlike other addictive substances alcohol is legal and heavily promoted.

And so, what people say about alcohol is very different from the reality of what is happening in our society because of alcohol.

IS DRINKING ALCOHOL A SIN?

Of course, the question that is debated among Christians is, "Is drinking alcohol a sin?" This is not a question asked by non-Christians. Their questions about alcohol usage revolve around legality and safety: what's the legal age to drink or purchase alcoholic beverages and please be careful not to drink and drive.

Since alcohol is addictive, we have to practice moderation and teach our young people to use alcohol responsibly. It's more complicated for Christians because we are called upon to remain sober minded and not jeopardize our spiritual alertness, clarity of mind and self-control with any substance or pattern of thinking (false ideas, or teachings).

Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- I Peter 1:13

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

- I Peter 5:8

Who do you think he devours? He devours the drunks.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

- Ephesians 5:18

There are also scriptures that repeatedly warn believers about the dangers inherent in the use of alcohol.

Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler,
And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.

- Proverbs 20:1

²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow?
Who has contentions? Who has complaining?
Who has wounds without cause?
Who has redness of eyes?

³⁰ Those who linger long over wine,
Those who go to taste mixed wine.

³¹ Do not look on the wine when it is red,
When it sparkles in the cup,
When it goes down smoothly;

³² At the last it bites like a serpent
And stings like a viper.

³³ Your eyes will see strange things
And your mind will utter perverse things.

³⁴ And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea,

Or like one who lies down on the top of a mast.

³⁵ "They struck me, but I did not become ill;
They beat me, but I did not know it.

When shall I awake?

I will seek another drink."

- Proverbs 23:29-35

This last passage describes well the experience of the alcoholic (3,000 years ago – same as today).

For example, my uncle Paul started with wine at a wedding when he was fifteen years old. He eventually developed and died from bone cancer from his lifelong alcohol addiction.

So, back to our original question, "Is drinking alcohol a sin?"

There are only two possible answers (yes or no) and I'd like to examine the reasoning behind each of these.

A. Yes, and consumption of alcohol in any of its forms is sinful, for several reasons:

1. The Bible warns of the negative consequences of its repeated use, which we ignore in doing so. This is called rebellion.
2. Having one drink may not be sinful by itself but every addiction always begins with a first ingestion of the addictive substance. This is called foolishness.
3. Using alcohol in any amount begins to diminish our spiritual awareness and mental clarity. It dilutes the effectiveness of our sobriety, which we are told to guard. This is called disobedience.
4. Using alcohol diminishes the effectiveness of our Christian witness as sincere, even zealous believers. People see Christians who drink as lukewarm, worldly minded and soft. This is called hypocrisy – we say that we're one thing but purposefully do what contradicts what we say.
5. The use of alcohol contributes nothing to our faith, nor does it glorify God in any way. This is called worldliness.

B. Let's now take a look at the no side of this issue.

Christians rarely say that drinking is not a sin, period. They may say things like:

1. The Bible says drunkenness is a sin, not just having a drink. That's a little like saying, lusting in your heart isn't a sin, it's when you have sex with that person that it becomes a sin. We know what Jesus said about that – the first step on the road to sin is sin just like the last step.
2. The most common defense of this practice is that drinking in moderation is not sinful because there is no drunkenness. This is how many believers participate in social drinking at parties and clubs. "I'm drinking responsibly and moderately so it's ok."

C. Here are some responses to this type of thinking and attitude towards alcohol use:

1. Social drinking is the consumption of alcohol simply for pleasure's sake. This then is the use of alcohol for what this substance does – lowers inhibitions, relaxes the senses and motor skills. These are things that diminish the spirit and stimulate the flesh.
2. Social drinking undermines our Christian witness. Using any type of highly addictive substance for recreation's sake, to fit in, to downplay our purity and godliness diminishes the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Non-Christians with whom you drink may be relieved that you are not some kind of religious zealot and will go out and have a drink with you, but they are not impressed with your faith or attracted to Christ by your attitude. In the end, you're one of them, comfortable in the world.
3. Social drinking puts one at risk for addiction. If you drink socially and privately, the regular ingestion of the poisonous and addictive substance of alcohol continually heightens your risk of addiction. All Alcoholics began as social drinkers. Why would a Christian knowingly do this?
4. Social drinking makes you less useful to God. God does not call those addicted, fighting addiction, or too immature to realize the danger of addiction into the service of serious ministry. He doesn't recruit the

weak-willed, worldly, spiritually compromised to do the heavy lifting in the church.

WHAT DID JESUS DO?

Many justify their consumption of alcohol based on the fact that Jesus drank wine and even transformed water into wine (John 2:1-11). As a Jew, living at that time and place, it is safe to say that he drank wine and even produced wine miraculously at the wedding in Cana. However, research about the customs of those times reveals the following:

1. Jesus used wine as food. He was not a social drinker using strong drink for recreational purposes in public houses and feasts.
2. The wine the Jews used in the 1st century was low in alcohol content (2 - 3%) as opposed to today (beer 6%, wine 13%, liquor 50 to 60%).
3. In addition to this, the Jews would mix their wine with water thereby further deluding the alcohol content. Those who drank fully fermented wine without deluding it first with water were considered "Barbarians" and wine-bibbers/drunksards – (Matthew 24:49).
4. There is no reason to think that the wine Jesus miraculously produced was any different (0-2% alcohol level) since the quality of the wine was based on the type of grapes used, not the percent of alcohol contained.

The comment of the steward, that the host kept the best wine for last means that he kept the wine from the best grapes for last, not the wine with the highest alcohol content for last.

So, if Jesus is your model for drinking, then you are drinking wine (2% alcohol) diluted with water. And you drink only this fruit of the vine, no beer or liquor and no consumption of alcohol for recreational purposes, or in bars or clubs, etc.

WHAT ABOUT PAUL'S INSTRUCTION TO TIMOTHY?

No longer drink water exclusively but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

- I Timothy 5:23

Note that Timothy only drink water at a time when water, especially in cities with public supply, was often contaminated. The only alcoholic drink that can help stomach issues was red wine.

Research has found that red wine contains polyphenols which increase the good bacteria in the stomach which in turn helps with digestion. (Oct. 23, 2012 – arshadmalkmd.com). Note that the instruction is a little wine with water as a medicinal treatment, not a green light for social drinking of various kinds of alcoholic drinks.

We see the medicinal use of alcohol for those near death or extreme sorrow in the Old Testament as well.

Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to him whose life is bitter.

- Proverbs 31:6

Alcohol was used in primitive medicine, however, today we have effective medication to treat digestive issues, chronic pain as well as emotional issues like depression - we no longer need wine as medicine.

SUMMARY – HOW DO WE DECIDE?

Part of maturing in Christ is the ability to make correct decisions that reflect both the teaching and the spirit of God's Word. I know that even in my own life, my understanding, teaching and practice concerning the subject of alcohol has evolved over the years and is now represented in this particular lesson on alcohol and what is commonly referred to as moderate social drinking.

To summarize, good decisions about the use of alcohol by Christians (as well as good decisions about any number of topics that involve what is right or wrong for believers) need to be based on facts and the teaching of God's word, not feelings, commercials, what's popular or what others choose and encourage us to do.

In this spirit, therefore, I give you 5 reasons for and five reasons against the consumption of alcohol in any amount.

5 BEST REASONS TO DRINK ALCOHOL

1. Makes you feel good, free and happy for a time.
2. Alcoholic drinks taste good, and are enjoyable to consume.
3. Most people can drink without getting drunk or addicted.
4. Alcohol is inexpensive and easily available.
5. Everybody drinks!
 - - at work, business
 - - family occasions
 - - friends encourages my social drinking
 - - I often see other Christians drink

5 REASONS NOT TO DRINK ALCOHOL

1. Alcohol is the number one drug problem in the world.
2. Alcohol is one of the major causes of illness, accidents, death, crime and a major cause of family destruction.
3. Alcohol does not contribute to a person's physical, emotional, social or spiritual well-being in any way.
4. The Bible warns against the dangers of alcohol and repeatedly condemns its abuse in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,
¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.
- I Corinthians 6:9-10

5. Christians who drink alcohol weaken their spiritual lives and undermine their influence for Christ with the unsaved.

No one admires a Christian who permits himself the use of alcohol.

My only regret as far as this topic is concerned is that I was late in coming to these conclusions especially as someone who abused drugs for many years and was rescued from that destructive life by the love of Jesus and the gospel of forgiveness - I should have known better, it might have helped others.

In any event, you have the facts before you and I ask you to decide:

If you drink casually, moderately, once in a while, every weekend, or every day - reconsider your decision based on the Bible and the facts and stop - it's the right and Biblical thing to do as a follower of Jesus.

On the other hand, if you don't drink:

- Decide now ahead of time that you won't start.
- Prepare your answer for those who insist that you join in a drink.
- Don't be ashamed to say that you don't drink because you're a Christian.
- Be ready for the blow-back, the disappointment, the laughter, the ache of hurt and the quiet rejection that might follow.

Just remember that there is sometimes a price to pay for being a disciple of Jesus, but realize there is also a reward for doing the right thing at the right time and for the right reason.

6.

Pro-Life or Pro Death

PART 1

No series of controversial topics would be complete or relevant if it did not include some discussion about the issue of abortion.

In the United States on January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court, in a 7-2 decision ruled that a state law that banned abortion (except to save the life of the mother) was unconstitutional thus legalizing abortion nationwide. The legal reasoning behind the court's decision was that forcing women to go through an unwanted pregnancy violated the 14th Amendment of the Constitution - which guarantees an individual's right to privacy.

The argument basically said that the government forcing a woman to have a baby was an unconstitutional invasion of her privacy. That decision should only be made by the woman and her doctor. That was the legal theory. The moral argument was that the baby was part of the mother's body and only she had the right to choose what could or could not be done to her body.

The medical theory was that legal abortion lowered the number of deaths caused by illegal abortions and also drove down death due to pregnancy complications by allowing more research into providing safer abortion methods.

Of course, many disagreed with this law and began to advocate and lobby for state laws that would limit or eliminate abortions altogether. From this battle arose two opposing groups (Pro-Choice/who favor unrestricted abortion and Pro-Life/who wanted abortion eliminated or severely limited to specific situations).

Each of these is an umbrella for hundreds of different organizations who raise funds, lobby politicians, provide information and work with pregnant women in trying to either facilitate their abortion or help them go through with their pregnancy and later assist them in placing their babies in foster care.

In this and the following chapter, I'd like to review what abortion is; some of the arguments for and against abortion; and what the Bible teaches us about this topic.

WHAT IS ABORTION?

The English word abortion comes from the Latin word "Abortus" which means, to die. It is primarily used to describe a medical procedure where an unborn child is killed while still inside the mother.

Now, abortions and miscarriages are different. A miscarriage is when the unborn child dies of natural causes such as various diseases, improper positioning inside the mother, an accident or illness on the mother's part. An abortion, on the other hand, is the deliberate killing of the unborn baby by another person.

There are a variety of abortion procedures depending on the development of the unborn child.

1. Suction Method

This is the most common form done at about ten weeks of development. A powerful vacuum hose is inserted into the mother and the child is literally sucked out in pieces and discarded.

2. D & C Method (Dilation & Curettage)

This method is performed at about twelve weeks. This method uses a sharp loop shaped steel knife. The surgeon uses this to enter into the uterus and literally cut the baby into pieces and scrape it out. There is usually a lot of bleeding in this method. Many who say women will use coat hangers to self-abort are referring to this method of abortion. Although this is a highly emotional example and argument, very few women try to abort themselves.

3. Salt Poisoning

At four – five months the baby is too big and well formed for the suction or the D& C method. A saline solution is injected into the sac which poisons the child and then labor is induced in order to eject the dead baby.

4. Dilation & Extraction or Partial Birth Method

This is a late term abortion taking place in the 20–32-week period. The doctor, guided by ultrasound, will locate the baby's legs and pull it into the birth canal while it is alive! He will then insert scissors into the base of the baby's neck and puncture a hole in its brain. A suction tube is inserted into the brain and the brains are sucked out. Afterwards, the body is removed and discarded. This method was banned in 2003 and upheld by the Supreme Court in 2007.

5. R.U. 486 – Abortion Pill

This is the newest method, still being experimented with for early abortion. It causes the lining of the uterus to bleed profusely and dislodge the baby thus causing its death. These are the gruesome methods used to abort, or cause the death of the unborn.

These are not radical, pro-life, emotional ideas, they are the reality of what happens when someone has an abortion. Now, let's look at some of the reasons that people use to defend these practices and some responses to these.

PRO-CHOICE ARGUMENTS

As gruesome as these procedures are, millions of Americans defend and promote them under the "Pro-choice" banner. Of course, they defend their actions, with several arguments that I wish to describe and respond to at this time. There are really five main arguments used to defend abortion on demand. In this first part I want to explain some of these.

1. The Fetus is Not Human

This is why it is called a "fetus" (from the Latin word meaning offspring) rather than a child or a baby. Abortionists claim that the fetus doesn't become viable, meaning an actual living human before a certain time, until then it is just a mass of cells and tissue. Until it is human, there is no problem in eliminating it in any way that is convenient.

This argument may have held sway 100 years ago, but today modern medicine has demonstrated how early from the time of conception human characteristics are developed and obvious. For example:

- The heart begins to form on the 18th day
- Eyes form on the 19th day
- Regular pulse at the 24th day
- By the first month, the baby will have had the greatest growth spurt of its entire lifetime - it will be 10,000 times bigger than the fertilized egg at conception.
- By the 33rd day the brain is forming, and brain waves can be recorded by the 43rd day (six weeks). It is interesting to note that the lack of brain waves is what doctors use to determine if a person is legally dead but won't use to acknowledge if a person is alive or human enough to preserve.

- By the 10th week (the time of most abortions) the baby responds to touch, can move its feet, head, hands, eyes, and mouth.
- By the 13th week the unborn child has everything that will be found in a full-term baby - all that is left is the development in size and formation.
- All it needs is food and time to grow into a fully developed human being.

The idea that a fertilized egg is not a baby is true in that it doesn't look like a baby to the naked eye, however:

- Modern science has shown us that very soon after conception it does begin to look like a human being so that what is being aborted is something that looks, feels and acts like a human person.

This notion that in abortion you're simply removing a mass of cells, like a tumor or growth, and not a person is also illogical.

- A tumor or growth, if left alone will simply become a larger tumor or growth. Destroying it at any stage of growth is destroying what it eventually is - a tumor or growth.
- A fertilized egg is destined to be a person and destroying it at any stage of its development destroys what it eventually will become - a person, not a tumor or growth.

Biologically speaking, a tumor is a tumor the moment it begins to form and will grow and develop into malignancy if left alone - but it will always be a tumor, it will not grow into a child. In the same way, a child is a child the moment it begins to form and develop into human form if left alone - but it will always be a child, it will never grow into a tumor. When you remove a fetus at any stage of development, you are removing a child because that's what it is from the moment it was conceived (women don't conceive cell masses or tumors - they conceive children every time).

2. Choice

The abortion lobby gave itself the name "Pro-Choice" to cover the real issue of its movement and that was the killing of the unborn. This term also describes one of its most sacred arguments - the right of every woman to choose what will happen with her body.

- This idea grew out of a legitimate complaint that women have been traditionally discriminated against and abused by society in general and men specifically.
- Women wanted greater respect and fair treatment. They also wanted more protection by abusive males, which are all legitimate and proper goals.
- To this cause the abortionists added the right to choose to have a baby or not because a woman's body was her own and no one, especially a man should force her to have a baby if she didn't want to.

The problem with this argument is that it is partly true - a woman's body is her own and no one should force her to use it or abuse it in any way.

- The false part is thinking that a baby is part of her body. Once the child is conceived it has its own body completely different from her body.
- The baby depends on the mother for food, etc., but is another human being living within her.
- This is just like an aged parent living with her child depending on them for care but still an independent person.

A woman can choose for her own body but does not have the right to choose life or death for another person, even if that person is living within her. Again, the abortionists are so contradictory. They fight for a female's right to rule over her own body even if it means killing a female child in order to guarantee that right.

Western civilization rejects the ancient law of Roman Paterfamilias where the father had the right of life or death over their children. However, with the pro-choice movement, we've substituted the equally abhorrent law of Materfamilias where women now have the sole right of life or death over their unborn children.

3. The Well Being of the Mother or the Child

This is the most sensitive part of the debate because there are terrible instances that make abortion seem like a viable option. Sometimes a child is conceived through rape, incest or by a very young girl. Sometimes a child is destined to be born into poverty, war or an abusive home. Sometimes the unborn child itself is ill or deformed or mentally challenged. At times there are legitimate concerns that the mother's life or her long-term health will be at risk. Abortionists solve these issues by terminating the life of the child, the most defenseless and innocent of the ones concerned.

Again, the mistake here is the idea that the unborn child will somehow contribute negatively to the well-being of the mother (we know it doesn't contribute to the child who dies). On the contrary the majority of the abortions are performed out of convenience, not concern. The clause in the abortion law that says that abortion is permitted for the health and well-being of the mother can be interpreted (and has been) as too much stress or weight gain or a new baby would interfere with career or an existing family.

There are, of course other times when there is a legitimate concern for the mother or child. There are the situations where difficult decisions need to be made:

- In the case of rape or incest (which are rare) abortion doesn't remove the original violation, it merely adds another terrible violation to the list, the killing of an innocent child and more suffering for the mother.

- In the case of poverty, inconvenience or a dysfunctional home or society - since when has killing the innocent ever reduced or solved the causes of these problems?
- In the case of a deformed or ill child the abortionists can easily destroy because they measure the value of life by outward things, forgetting that every human is created in God's image and therefore equally valuable and worthy of respect, protection, and life regardless of how they look, how healthy they are or how smart they will be.
- In the case where the mother's life is in danger (which is equally rare) we have a classic "no win" situation, the mother or the child.
 - Doctors will usually try to save the one that has the best chance at survival, which is in accordance with their training and ethics as physicians.
 - In such cases we can only throw ourselves on God's mercy because whatever we choose falls short of our goal to preserve life.

One argument made is that if we don't allow abortion, women will self-abort or go back-room abortionists and die.

- Before the Supreme Court ruled abortion legal in 1973 in the U.S.A, only 36 such cases were reported, not the thousands claimed by abortionists in order to gain publicity and influence in Washington.
- Actually, there have been more injury, infertility, and death from abortion since then because more women have felt free to go ahead and have this dangerous procedure done to them.

The well-being of a woman is not served through abortion except in very rare situations. On the contrary, abortion is unnatural, violent, and

psychologically, as well as spiritually, damaging to the woman but they are rarely told this by Pro-Choice advocates.

ADDENDUM

On June 24, 2022 the Supreme Court overturned Roe vs. Wade eliminating the constitutional protection of abortion across the United States and allowing individual states to set their own laws regulating this procedure. This decision means that the struggle between the Pro Choice and Pro Life advocates will now be played out at the state level across the country. The Supreme Court ruling does not eliminate abortion, it simply changes the place where the battle over this procedure will be fought in the future.

7.

Pro-Life or Pro Death

PART 2

In the previous chapter we reviewed the different ways that abortions are performed, usually decided upon by the development of the baby. The main ones are:

- Suction, Curettage, salt poisoning, Dilation and Extraction (partial birth), and the newest being R.U. 486 which is the abortion pill.

As gruesome as abortion is, there are a great number of people who not only support it as a viable birth control option but promote it rigorously.

The defense of this procedure comes in several arguments:

1. Abortion is acceptable because the fetus is not human.

The idea that what is removed from the mother is nothing more than a mass of cells is refuted by the fact that fertilized eggs begin to demonstrate human characteristics long before they are deemed "viable" by abortionists. The "thing" that a woman conceives is not a tumor but a living person who needs only time and nourishment to become a fully developed human being. 100% of human pregnancies result in human babies.

2. Abortion is purely a matter of choice.

The pro-choice movement sees abortion as the sole and undeniable right of a woman to choose what will happen to her body. Both women and men should be free to use the gift of free will that God gave to humans, but God does not permit a person the freedom to kill another person. Freedom and choice have limits, one of the limits is when our choice harms or destroys another.

3. Abortion is feasible because it protects the mother.

Some pregnancies are the result of rape and incest; some will produce sick or deformed children; some will threaten the life of the mother. The pro-choice answer to all these scenarios is to abort the child because this solution will best serve the mother. However, psychologists tell us that even in the extreme cases, abortion doesn't necessarily serve the woman best and it certainly does no good to the innocent child.

There are other options that can better serve the mother spiritually, emotionally, as well as physically, but they are not the "quick fix" that abortion seems to be. Abortion is quickly done as well as profitable (for abortionists), but often regretted for a lifetime by those who chose this option.

In this section I'd like to discuss the last few arguments used by pro-choice supporters, and discuss what the Bible teaches about abortion. Not being a woman, I am sure that there are certain experiences and issues that I may be missing here but my purpose is to at least clarify the two sides of the argument and lay before you some pertinent Scriptures that deal with this issue.

ARGUMENTS FOR ABORTION

4. Overpopulation

Abortion is necessary because the world is rapidly becoming overpopulated. Again, partial truths mixed in with lies to push the abortion agenda.

A. There are parts of the world that are overcrowded and struggling to have food, water and other resources. In most cases the problem is not overpopulation, the problem is improper distribution of the world's resources. Greed fuels high prices and stockpiling which penalizes poor countries. There is enough food and water to care for everyone in the world, the problem is that sinful people hoard or waste much of it and this results in suffering for the poor.

B. The world's population will explode if we don't do something about it. There are concentrations of overcrowding in certain developing countries, but this is not the main problem. In spite of propaganda to the contrary, western civilization is actually dying out. In order to maintain the western world's population, each woman needs to produce 2.1 children (statistically).

- In western Europe, Canada, and the U.S. the average reproduction rate is 1.8 children per woman. Italy is the country with the fastest decline with an average of 1.3 children per woman.

In 1900 western nations had 30% of the world's population.

- In 1950 – 22% of the world's population
- In 1995 – 15% of the world's population
- In 2030 – 9% of the world's population
- By 2100 – 4% of the world's population

Our self-indulgent lifestyle, sexual diseases, increasing abortion, and dismantling of the traditional family are contributing to the eventual demise of not only this country but western civilization as we know it. Abortion is just the most obvious sin of a civilization that continually mutilates itself. Researchers have also shown that in poorer nations the threat of overpopulation is also slowing down as birth rates decline. For example:

- 6.1 per women in 1970
- 4.0 per woman in 2020

The point is that the threat of overpopulation is overblown and even if it were so, abortion would not be the best solution since there are other ways of controlling population that don't involve abortion at all.

5. Pro-Life People Don't Really Care

Here, pro-choice supporters deviate from the issue and make the argument personal. The accusation is that pro-life people don't care about the suffering and struggle a woman experiences in raising a child, especially if she is alone to do it. It's easy to march in the street and denounce pregnant women and then simply go home and offer no other help.

Again, if this were totally true, they might have a point, but these accusations are not completely accurate. Pro-life people and groups have done things to raise awareness of this issue, and some have become radical even destructive in their zeal.

For example, those disturbed people who destroy property or attempt to kill pro-choice supporters have nothing morally or legally in common with a cause dedicated to preserving the dignity of life. Of course, the pro-choice side has focused on a few extremists in the pro-life movement and made them the model for all anti-abortionists. This is a good P.R. tactic, but does not fairly represent the pro-life movement. The truth of the matter is that the caring and loving option is the one that has the interest of both the mother and the child at heart.

Most pro-life counseling centers offer guidance as far as what will happen to the child once it is born. Also, there is support and encouragement of the mother while she goes through the pregnancy. I might add that Christians, from the very beginning, have been the main defenders of the unborn. Few people or groups will ever equal the contributions made to society as far as care and compassion for all kinds of needs made by Christians over the centuries. The only contribution pro-abortionists have made is to reduce the population through the killing of the unborn.

There may be some other arguments for abortion but the five discussed here are the major points of disagreement. Now, let's take a look at what the Bible teaches us about this issue.

THE BIBLE AND ABORTION

We know that the Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not abort," however, it does provide several principles that guide us when dealing with this issue.

1. The Unborn Genuinely Possess Human Life

Jesus Christ made the transition from divine to human through conception and birth.

"...but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men."

- Philippians 2:7

It is said that the baby inside of Elizabeth (John) "leaped for joy" when Mary greeted Elizabeth.

- Luke 1:44

David, in talking about God's love, explains that God loved him, knew him, and observed him even before he came out of his mother at birth.

"For you created my innermost being, you formed me together in my mother's womb."

- Psalm 139:13

Throughout the Bible the unborn are identified and given names and what they will do in life is prophesied (i.e. John and Jesus). God considers a person a living being when they are conceived and His love for them begins at this point as well. Should our love not begin at the same time?

2. Unlawful Killing is Forbidden by God

Not all killing is sinful. In certain cases:

- Death through accident
- Death in a war
- Death through legal execution
- Death as a result of lawful self-defense

God permits the taking of life in certain situations, but He has not authorized the government, doctors or pregnant women to kill the unborn for their convenience. When we deliberately kill the innocent unborn it is a sin and against God's law and we will be punished for it. God says, "Thou shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13) and that includes those who are not yet born.

3. Happiness Cannot Be Achieved Through Wealth and Comfort

There are life and death situations where abortions become a necessary option, but statistics show that most abortions are performed to avoid inconvenience and financial burden. People who use this option to safeguard their lifestyle, peace of mind or finances don't realize that the only way to find happiness, peace of mind and security is through faith in Jesus Christ and service to others in His name.

Jesus said in Matthew 25 that the Kingdom of God belongs to those who feed the hungry and thirsty, visit the sick and imprisoned as well as care

for the poor. True contentment, therefore, comes to those who care for those who are weak and helpless, not by amassing wealth and power. No one has ever claimed to have found peace, joy and lasting contentment through abortion, only temporary relief.

SUMMARY

We live at a time where our society has become very sophisticated when it comes to sin. In a way we resemble the Corinthian church who didn't see anything wrong with a man who was having sex with his father's wife. Today sexual identity groups march in the streets and flaunt their sexual immorality in the face of the nation with the approval of our highest elected officials. We use God's name in vain publicly in movies and on television and applaud the people who do.

We kill the unborn out of convenience and only recently has our highest court struck down the law that permitted abortion, not because of moral considerations but because the law itself was improperly applied. By sending the abortion issue to be settled by state legislators the court still has not acknowledged that abortion is the taking of a human life and refuse to extend the protection of law to the most helpless of our citizens, the unborn.

It has been said that you measure the greatness of a nation by how it treats its weakest members - if this is so then the time of our greatness is past because we promote the killing of the unborn and through the influence of entertainment celebrities and abortion lobbyists, many states are drafting laws that will make it easier to kill those who are too old, too weak or sick to be valuable anymore.

As Christians, we sometimes feel helpless in the face of such overwhelming wickedness and it is easy to lose heart and feel that there is nothing to be done. We need to remember, however, that Christians have always been the minority, have always been the voice crying in the wilderness, have always been at odds with conventional wisdom and morality.

When it comes to abortion, what can we do as Christians?

1. Teach Our Children About Sex

The world teaches our daughters to dress immodestly, use sex in order to be popular, and abort the babies they don't want. It teaches our young men that sex is power and that their only responsibility is to protect themselves and their partners from disease or unwanted pregnancies. We need to teach our children that sex is powerful, but its power is destructive when used outside of marriage, and one of the most destructive consequence is the abortion that they will be tempted to have as a result of an unwanted pregnancy.

2. Vote for Pro-Life Candidates

Thankfully we live in a country where people, even Christians, have some influence in choosing their leaders. Politicians can ignore letters, marches, and sermons but they pay attention to the ballot box. We have a right to elect officials who promote and uphold Christian standards and where a man or woman stands on the issue of abortion will usually tell you where they stand on other moral issues as well. If you don't usually vote, please do so and when you do, support the people who uphold what is right not simply what is popular. We bear responsibility for the people we vote for and for what they do, good or bad.

3. Have Mercy on the Mothers and the Babies

Pro-choice usually promotes the welfare of the woman exclusively and the pro-life people have focused on the ethical and moral issue of the abortion without giving due consideration or assistance to the actual people involved. What is needed is mercy, kindness, and support for both mother and child, regardless of the circumstances of the conception. Sometimes this means acceptance and forgiveness when the mother is your own daughter or friend or spouse. Sometimes it means contributing and helping the organizations that serve the mothers and the unborn. If the people who are here make this a more welcoming and loving world perhaps women would be more willing to bring their babies to birth regardless of the way they were conceived.

4. Don't Be Discouraged

The aborted babies will be with God in heaven. The guilty who committed and supported abortion will be judged and those who made the personal sacrifice to have their babies in difficult circumstances will never regret the lives they brought into this world.

8.

Pornography and Behavior

Here is a summary of the material we will examine in this chapter devoted to pornography:

1. A review of the definitions and types of pornography.
2. A look at some recent statistics concerning the most prevalent form of porn – internet pornography.
3. A summary of the arguments for or against the use of porn.
4. Some ways to avoid or break the habit of consuming pornography.

One session is not enough to deal with this complex issue but hopefully it can help to inform, warn, and encourage those who are struggling with this destructive addiction.

WHAT IS PORNOGRAPHY?

Two Words:

- Porn – prostitute
- Graph – to write

Depiction of sex acts in words or pictures in order to cause sexual excitement. There is no pornography without an audience, without an audience it's an orgy or just sex.

EXAMPLES OF PORNOGRAPHY

Soft Core

- Movies with partial nudity and sex scenes.
- Commercials that use sex to get your attention.
- Books and magazines that use words and images in order to arouse.
- Internet images that use sex to draw attention.

Hard Core

- Actual sex acts, violence
- X-rated movies/magazines/snuff films/etc.
- Interactive sex websites

The use of words, images, films to stimulate sexual response for a variety of reasons is widespread in our society. Regardless of what community standards are or what the courts say, our responsibility is to determine what our response to pornography is to be as Christians.

STATISTICS – INTERNET PORN

I want to focus on internet porn because this is the fastest growing "delivery system" for pornography. In 2000 I researched statistics for internet porn for a class I was to teach at the Oklahoma Christian University lectures. I want to show you these stats and compare them to statistics for the year 2020.

| | 2000 | 2020 |
|----------------|---------------|---|
| Porn Sites | 3,712 | 80 million |
| Habitual Users | 200,000 | More users than Amazon, Netflix and Twitter combined 35% of all downloads are porn related #1 porn site, Pornhub has 16 million viewers per day |
| Revenue | \$400 million | \$97 billion per year |

U.S.A has the most daily visits to the Pornhub website.

Remember, I'm only talking about the number of users and revenue for internet porn, not movies and books which as an industry was generating \$7 billion in revenue back in 2000 and has grown since then.

Pornography, therefore, is a big business, especially in the U.S.A and a tremendous moral and spiritual problem in this society. The new number one search is for virtual reality pornography. Its popularity is growing with children under fifteen as well because they have free and easy access to the internet where they are targets for those who produce and sell pornography. 79% of people's first exposure to pornography occurs at home. The average age of exposure to porn is eleven years and most "at risk" youth are in the twelve to seventeen age group.

Enough about statistics, let's look at the arguments for and against pornography and its consumption.

ARGUMENTS FOR PORNOGRAPHY

There are many arguments to support the production and distribution of pornography.

1. It's Good for You (Catharsis) - Psychological argument

We all have sexual feelings and/or violent tendencies that we cannot express. By watching or indulging in pornography we are able to release tension without hurting anyone. This is the most popular argument for both the production and legal distribution of porn as well as the legalization of prostitution.

2. Freedom of Speech - Social argument

It's a free country and we are allowed to say or show anything we want to. If you censor this, where will censorship end? People don't have to watch or read so producers should be allowed to write, film or stage whatever they choose and if people don't like it, they can turn it off.

3. Profits - Economic (most powerful) argument

Aside from the money made on the internet, pornography is a very profitable business taking in billions of dollars per year alone in print and billions more in film per year (Year 2020 - \$97 billion).

- Dial 900 numbers
- 20,000 porn bookstores in the U.S.A.
- 900 porn movie houses (only place where there was a decline)
- 250 different kinds of child porn magazines showing everything from incest to murder

- Pornography is very profitable and considered a growth industry. They even have their own conventions.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY

1. It's Not Good for You (answer to the catharsis argument)

The idea that porn is good for you has never been backed up with statistics (it's only a theory). Statistics, however, show that with the increase of distribution of pornography there is an increase of sexual and violent crime (prostitution, incest and rape). This is why they have laws to limit its production and distribution! Pornography has a primary negative effect on the viewer - it's addictive.

Pornography acts as a psychological narcotic. Some people are extremely sensitive to it, others become hooked by prolonged use. Like any addiction, pornography develops a craving for something that cannot in itself satisfy - it can only produce the desire for itself but once consumed, cannot satisfy, it only produces the desire for more.

- This is why it is a growth industry and so profitable.
- Eventually the mindless craving for more controls us.

The "kick" to pornography is that at the beginning, it provokes a reaction within that is pleasing, just as alcohol or drugs do. Drugs or alcohol relax or stimulate us, that's why we take them - pornography stimulates us emotionally.

- sexual arousal is the most common experience
- for some, it arouses aggressive feelings
- Pornography also surfaces and articulates our suppressed sexual fantasies and creates new ones for us to ponder

The problem, however, is that like illicit drugs or improper use of prescription drugs, it is not the answer or method of dealing with repressed desires and fantasies (sexual or otherwise). It simply makes things worse, like getting drunk to deal with your depression.

Repressed feelings, aggression, unsatisfied desires are best dealt with through prayer and the insight that comes from Bible study, counseling, and warm, committed relationships.

For most people God has provided the intimacy and security of the marriage bed for people to freely express themselves sexually.

- A. In marriage we have the perfect setting in which to share our deepest thoughts and explore our own sexuality to the point where we can be satisfied.
- B. This is why there is no limit to the creativity that a married couple can enjoy in a mutually developed sexual relationship.
- C. Those consuming porn begin to have less desire for sex with their live partner, preferring the stimulation that comes from their fantasy partners in pictures and film.

The answer to expressing the most joyful, creative, and satisfying sexuality is found in the freedom that Christ brings and the security that marriages provide, not in the consumption of pornography.

2. Freedom Brings Responsibility (answer to social argument)

The purveyors of porn say that this is a "free country." We are free to dispose of our garbage, but freedom also provides the responsibility of not polluting our environment with our garbage (freedom has responsibilities). We are free to think and imagine whatever we want but not free to pollute society through the media with a psychological narcotic.

There are obscenity laws and we can use them in order to restrict the type of material circulated in our community. We are free, but not free to harm others and pornography has proven to be harmful. Porn has the same effect on the brain as crack cocaine.

3. It is Not Profitable (answer to good business argument)

It might be financially profitable to a very few, but the overall effect on society in terms of crime, social misery, and the lowering of standards is very expensive in the long run. Society pays a high price for the damage that porn causes.

The arguments against porn from a Christian's view...

4. Involvement in Sexual Impurity is Condemned in the Bible.

Socially and psychologically pornography is harmful, but for the Christian the most important factor is what God says about it.

And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

- Genesis 2:25

Shows men and women before they sinned. Nakedness was a sign of innocence, lack of shame.

⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

- Genesis 3:6-7

After disobedience and sin came guilt, shame, and the loss of innocence. This was manifested by the desire to cover oneself. Except for intimacy within marriage (which is God ordained) nudity still causes guilt and shame. Why? Because we are still sinners and our inability to be naked without shame is a reminder. No amount of graphic nudity and social acceptance can remove this from our conscience.

The argument against pornography in the Bible is stated in positive terms. It tells us how we ought to be, rather than what we ought not to do (why we don't see a command that says, "thou shalt not consume porn...") Pornography is forbidden because it undermines our holiness. Pornography and holiness are incompatible. A holy person is sexually pure, chaste and clean. Christians cannot consume porn and remain holy, and without personal holiness there is no peace with self or God.

¹ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
- Romans 12:1-2

Our bodies are to be entirely holy.

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
- 1 Peter 1:14-16

Our new lives in Christ are evident in that we no longer are involved in sexual impurity.

...the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.

- I Corinthians 6:13b

God does not deny that our bodies desire these things but as Christians we are reminded that our bodies belong to a Holy God, and He has a holy purpose for it, and porn desecrates it.

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; ²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- Matthew 5:27-28

Jesus says we are guilty when we think unclean or improper thoughts. The object of pornography is to arouse us by putting these thoughts into our minds. For the Christian, this will violate his conscience.

For the Christian to willfully put into his heart and mind pornographic images depicting impersonal nudity, various forms of fornication (homosexuality, rape, pedophilia, etc.) is sinful. The only sexual fantasy we should have is for our marriage partner.

¹⁸ Let your fountain be blessed,
And rejoice in the wife of your youth.

¹⁹ As a loving hind and a graceful doe,
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
Be exhilarated always with her love.

- Proverbs 5:18-19

Our vicarious participation in these acts by viewing them through porn has a number of deleterious effects on us spiritually:

- It hurts our consciences.
- It destroys our peace of mind and communion with the Lord, ultimately separating us forever.

- It removes our joy of salvation (saddened).
- We become fearful, desensitized to what is good and pure (become apologists for lower standards).
- We begin having a false image of wholesome sex as God has created it. (Our libido is a fragile thing).

Jesus said that we can tell a tree by its fruit. This is a sample of the fruit that pornography produces.

BREAKING THE HABIT

Pornography becomes a habit. Like all habits we eventually lose the "kick" but retain the craving and we go into a vicious cycle where the objective is no longer the enjoyment of the "kick" but the satisfying of the craving, which never comes (like smoking). How do we break the cycle?

1. Recognize that it's wrong

For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
 My vitality failed *as* with the dry heat of summer.
 I acknowledged my sin to You,
 And I did not hide my guilt;
 I said, "I will confess my wrongdoings to the Lord";
 And You forgave the guilt of my sin.
 - Psalm 32:4-5

Without recognizing the fact that it is morally wrong or sinful the cycle is never broken. Most people just try to control their addictions rather than break them. To break it, you must first acknowledge that it is a sin. The impure do not inherit the kingdom and the sooner they realize it, the sooner they win the victory (Galatians 5:19). This is the beginning of the end for this sinful habit.

2. Accept Forgiveness – I John 1:9-10

The problem with porn as with other sexual sins is that it is committed against self and thus the scars run deep. God promises forgiveness. When we acknowledge our sin and forsake it, God forgives, we need to accept this. Even if the craving remains for a while as a vestige of this behavior; the sin, guilt, shame, and condemnation are washed away by the blood of Christ. And as long as the battle rages on, every time we go to God for help and forgiveness we are totally renewed in His eyes and can stand before Him without shame, even if we are ashamed of ourselves.

3. Get Help

"...if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous..."
- I John 2:1

People who are addicted have lost the ability, in one area of their lives, to control themselves. They need help:

- A. Begin by going to God in prayer about this on a regular basis. John says that Christ is a constant intercessor for us with God. Nothing surprises or discourages God. He will always listen.
- B. Share your struggle with a trusted friend. Your spouse is best. You can pray together, grow closer together, and share the burden together.
- C. Get professional help if prayer and sharing are not enough "There is wisdom in a multitude of counselors" (Pr. 15:22).

Sometimes a habit is a symptom of deeper problems that are manifesting themselves in this way (loneliness, depression, anger). The best way to face this is with courage and the hope that a Christian counselor can provide. We need to remember that God can use one's struggle with this particular, damaging sin to draw a person closer to Himself and develop within that person a more compassionate spirit towards other and their sins.

Of course, there are other resources to help protect us and our homes from this vice (computer filters/chips and settings to block out improper materials). It is so easy to accidentally go to a porn site by typing the wrong word, or are led to it by ads, so the best protection is to be vigilant as to what you permit into your home and heart.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O Lord, my rock and my Redeemer.
- Psalm 19:14

Watch what you watch (and what others are watching in your home) because God is watching you.

9. The Alphabet Gender Wars

Take a look at a recent poll:

16% OF GENERATION Z IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+ FROM A SURVEY DONE BY THE GALLOP ORGANIZATION.

Generation Z are those born between 1997 and 2002 (those between the ages of 19 – 24 today). They grow up with communication technology (cell phones), social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat) and entertainment in demand (Netflix, Twitch, Disney+). They get their news and world view from Google, Facebook, and YouTube. When they want to know why they are they get their answers from these sources, not their parents or the church or the Bible but from the internet and the voices and images staring back at them from their screens, which they stare at for an average of 4 hours and 15 minutes per day.

Twenty-five years ago, I produced a book about homosexuality (Gay Rights or Wrongs) which explained the growing influences of the gay lifestyle in our society by what was then a group that represented no more than 2% of the population of the U.S.

Twenty-five years later we are bombarded by demands for special rights and laws facilitating the deconstruction of gender norms which have been taken for granted by virtue of their obvious reality since the beginning of the human race.

HISTORY

Many people are surprised and in shock wondering, how did we get to this point in our history. That we have to actually defend the classic ideal model of acceptable sexual morality which is a monogamous heterosexual lifetime union between a man and a woman.

Today every part of that equation is being challenged socially, legally, medically, and morally. So much so that a better system has been marketed in order to identify individual departures from the ideal as well as a statement of solidarity among the various deviations from the previous, universally accepted norm. So, for information's sake let's break down the letter system used for identification purposes.

1. L = Lesbian — A woman who is sexually attracted to women.
2. G = Gay — A man who is sexually attracted to other men (previously homosexual). Also, a general term used for both men and women who have same-sex attraction.
3. B = Bisexual — A person sexually attracted to both men and women.
4. T = Transgender — A person whose gender identity is different than their biological gender (IE. - a man who presents as a woman).
5. T = Transexual — A person who has permanently changed their gender presentation through drugs and surgery.
6. Q = Queer — A generic term referring to any person who has identified away from traditional norm.
7. Q = Queer — One still seeking a gender identity away from the traditional norm.
8. I = Intersex — An individual whose anatomy or chromosomes do not fit the natural male/female biology (rare medical condition).
9. A = Ally — A heterosexual who supports and promotes the LGBTQ lifestyle and social/political agenda.

10. A = Asexual — An individual not sexually attracted to either male or female partners. Not the same as celibate by choice. Asexual has various sub-types but are individuals who have low or no desire for sexual contact.
11. P = Pansexual — A person attracted to every type of sexual identification and practice.

Now there are often sub-categories and gender types and composite types that continue to emerge and multiply as we speak. To a point that "Gender Studies" departments that constantly dissect and reinterpret the identity, meaning and malfunction of gender have become the norm on college campuses all across our nation. As a matter of fact, Christian universities like Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City, United States have to obtain a special waiver under Title IX from the Department of Education in order to exempt the school from having to have such a department.

This briefly is where we are in this country, where the LGBTQ+ alliance has gained enormous social and political power. Examples of which can be seen in the headlines and referred to concerning Generation Z or the recent attempt by the Biden Administration to nominate Dr. Rachel Levine (Pediatrician), a biological male presenting as a transgendered female to serve as Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services.

This person is an enthusiastic promoter of radical hormone treatment and surgery on children and teens in order to complete gender reassignment to youth suffering with sexual confusion and Gender Dysphoria: a condition where a young person has confusion concerning their biological gender and how it is expressed. The majority of those dealing with this issue work it out naturally through role modelling, encouragement and proper information concerning the condition. Dr. Levine promotes gender re-identification through powerful hormones and radical surgery, and this treatment without parental consent!

Minors can already obtain birth control pills and abortions at Planned Parenthood clinics in many states without parental notification or consent. Imagine what will happen now that this person is the number

two official in charge of the federal agency that sets health policy for the entire nation?

I could go on to describe the LGBTQ+ influence in business (required gender sensitivity training). LGBTQ individuals are allowed to serve in the military and the military must cover the cost of gender re-assignment treatment and surgery for Trans service personnel. Of course, in the entertainment industry where the most visible people on the planet enthusiastically approve of the LGBTQ+ agenda and lifestyle.

For example, you can't make a movie today without some type of LGBTQ+ character or actor nor can you portray this lifestyle negatively because you risk being called out or cancelled if you do.

Therefore, in the light of all of this, the questions that many Christians ask are the following:

1. How did we, as a nation, get here?
2. Where do we, as Christians, go from here and into the future?

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The Gay Rights Organization in the U.S. was organized by Henry Gerber on December 10, 1924 and called the Society for Human Rights. It was soon disbanded due to political pressure. After various attempts to organize, the National Coalition of Gay Organizations published its gay rights platform in 1972 which contained its primary social and political agenda going forward.

In all fairness, we have to realize that up until the 60's homosexuality and other deviations from the norm were treated as criminal behavior and not simply moral or psychological issues. The stated goal for homosexuals was to normalize these types of behaviors so as to be accepted into the social mainstream: This was the argument and public objective marketed at the time, "We just want to be accepted as we are."

The true goal, however, was to have gay values, thinking and lifestyle dominate the American culture and its social values. We see a glimpse of this in the original platform which, and I quote, sought the following changes:

1. Repeal of all laws prohibiting private sexual acts involving consenting persons.
2. Repeal all laws prohibiting prostitution, both male and female.
3. Repeal all laws governing the age of sexual consent.
4. Repeal all legislative provisions that restrict the sex or number of persons entering into a marriage unit.
5. Enactment of legislation so that child custody, adoption, etc. shall not be denied because of sexual orientation or marital status.
6. Encouragement and support for sex education courses, prepared and taught by gay men and women presenting homosexuality as a valid, healthy preference and lifestyle, and as a viable alternative to heterosexuality.

The amazing fact is that this agenda, compiled by the gay coalition, was published in 1972, more than fifty years ago!

So, how did we get here?

- A very determined set of people with a very clear agenda who had powerful allies in the media and entertainment industry simply went about establishing their will and ways first in the field of entertainment and then in politics in order to achieve their goals.
- For example, the GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) website listed the ABC television network as the second most gay-friendly network in America (the first was the CW Network).
- ABC owns the Walt Disney Corporation which is one of the most gay-friendly companies in the U.S. (even had an openly gay

president of Walt Disney World). We know now that the Disney company has begun to purposefully groom children to accept homosexuality as normal through its movies and special line of gay friendly toys.

Through the media, they have been able to promote this gay agenda for decades and with Washington's help, the gay agenda became mainstream in the nineties. The breakthrough came, however, when they promoted their agenda not simply as an alternative lifestyle, but rather as a minority right. They married their cause with the legitimate fight for civil rights fought for by many groups – cultural minorities, people with handicaps, the poor and women. Gays argued that they were born gay (no medical proof of this, but who cares when the media is behind you?), so they couldn't help being gay and to oppose them or their lifestyle was being intolerant. They even gave the opposition to their lifestyle a name – homophobia.

If, therefore, you merely disagreed, you were a bigot, you were intolerant and a homophobe. Never mind that you had the facts and 6,000 years of human history, not to mention, the Bible on your side. You were no match for the gay PR machine.

Then along came the lawyers and the politicians looking for a new cause to fight for, another oppressed group to defend. This group was a lot easier to defend because there was no dirty work.

- With minorities, handicapped and the poor you had to get your hands dirty.
- For these minorities there had to be marches, soup kitchens, the threat of violence, and money had to be spent. Helping these minorities took time and effort and presented very few opportunities for glamor or awards.

Gay Rights, however, were different.

- They were, as a group, fairly wealthy.

- Many were famous and powerful.

It was a political jackpot!

- Politicians were able to crusade as minority and civil rights advocates for people who gave them money.
- And all they wanted was to be legitimized by the state.

Mix this cocktail together for 50 years and you end up with a president and a large number of politicians promoting a piece of legislation called the "Equality Act" that has been passed by the House of Representatives and has not yet (as of this writing) been voted on by the senate.

Without going into too much detail, this Act which is an amendment to the 1964 Civil Rights Act, prevents discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. One ominous note is that this Act trumps the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) 1993. This was the law that protected religious people and groups from being forced to do things that were legal but against their moral standards or religious beliefs. For example:

- Christian bakers refusing to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple.
- Catholic business owners having to provide birth control for employees.
- Ministers refusing to marry same-sex or trans couples.

If this law passes as is, it gives LGBTQ individuals tremendous legal power to sue individuals and churches who continue to denounce their lifestyle or refuse to offer services based on religious grounds (i.e. hire openly gay or trans ministers).

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Many Christians think that the world is too far gone, and it has become hopeless to reform it and return the U.S. to being a "Christian nation" once again. Others believe that politics will solve the moral deficiencies of our country. Let's elect believing politicians and lobby them to enact laws that reflect Christian views. Then there are those who want to fight fire with fire. Get nasty and aggressive, or do whatever it takes to gain and keep power and use it for good – for America, America first.

I don't believe that Jesus would endorse any of these approaches to achieve His goals, because His goals have never been political or based on the search for earthly power. Jesus' instructions to His followers at this or any other time in history are the following:

1. We are not of this world

If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.
- John 15:19

We are citizens of the Kingdom; we are only passing through this world waiting for Jesus to equip us with glorified bodies that will enable us to live with God in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is in heaven. Let's not, therefore, be surprised at what unbelieving, unregenerated people are capable of thinking and doing when their only guide is what they feel or what their hearts (completely devoid of God's Word and Spirit) lead them to do. Be shocked, offended, in disagreement, even angry but don't be surprised or discouraged! It is the world ruled by Satan and captured by sin. Didn't Paul explain the world's condition and God's response to this in Romans chapter 1?

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known

about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

- Romans 1:18-32

From the time that sin entered the world at the beginning, to the time Paul the Apostle wrote these words in his letter to the Romans, and then

forward to our present age and onward until the end of time, when Jesus returns – the world was, is and will always be a wicked and sinful place. And it is so because God has allowed sinful men and women to choose to live and revel in their disbelief and depravity. Such is the result of creating human beings with absolute free will (they are made in the image of God and God has free will).

I say absolute because man's free will is such that despite the evidence within him and before him in creation, he can choose to deny even his own Creator. Paul says that in the same way, God's absolute free will permits Him to reject His own creation knowing that doing so will send the unbelievers into gross acts of sinfulness, spiritual darkness, and eternal death. We have no mandate to reverse the evil in the hearts and on the hands of the unbelieving, sinful generation among whom we find ourselves for a short time.

So, first and foremost, open your eyes to reality, the world is a sinful place, there's no changing that. Don't be shocked, angry, or discouraged by this reality – if anything be sorrowful for what man has done to himself and God's creation.

2. Remember your mission

Our mission is to save souls.

¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

- Matthew 28:18-20

There are various individuals whose only mission in life is to:

- Save animals, birds, and fish of various kinds.
- Save the planet, the climate, etc.

- Save the dignity and human rights of different cultures, social groups, children, the aged, the imprisoned, the poor, and the sexually confused.

These and countless others fighting to preserve ideologies, philosophies and individual freedoms are among the highest ideals and undertakings of those who want to save the world or at least make it better. These are humanists and this is their calling – "Save the world, it's the only one we have!"

With all due respect, this is not our calling and never has been. There's no saving this world, it has been marked for complete destruction by God, not man.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

- II Peter 3:10

Someone might say, "Well, what about Jesus saying that we should be light and salt?" (Matthew 5:13-16)

Yes, we are to exemplify the character of Christ in this sinful world but not for the purpose of saving the condition of the world but to provide light to reveal who can save souls, Jesus Christ.

Remember, the first sin was simple disobedience to the one law God provided man in order to activate his absolute free will, "Don't eat the fruit..." (Genesis 1:7).

The next sin was murder from jealousy and rage - Cain kills Abel (Genesis 4:8).

The next sin was sexual in nature - Abel's fifth generation grandson, Lamech took two wives. This was the first departure from God's original design and command. They called it "polygamy" and ever since then each

deviation from God's original command for marriage and human sexuality has been given its own name.

Today we use the alphabet, just to keep up. But in all the evil and departure from God's teachings and commands let's remember who we are and what we do!

...but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

- I Timothy 3:15

We are the church, we preserve and proclaim God's truth, in season and out. We're not here to save the world, we're here to light up the world with the gospel in order to save souls. The world is like a house on fire and the people inside don't know it and we're yelling, "Get out, save yourselves, your house is on fire!" Just like Peter did for the crowd in Jerusalem on Pentecost Sunday.

And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!"

- Acts 2:40

3. Trust God

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation but take courage; I have overcome the world.

- John 16:33

It's not easy living as a believer in this world, whether you're a teacher or Supreme Court Justice. However, God has not left us unarmed or unequipped. He has left us:

- A. His Word which is able to help us teach the truth, correct error, discern right from wrong and train us in right living (II Timothy 3:16).
- B. His Holy Spirit to dwell within us (Acts 2:38) who comforts us, help us to pray and will resurrect us on the last day (Romans 8).
- C. He has also created the world and human beings with undeniable markers so we can research and know the actual and marvelous functions of each.

Scientific research is the process of knowing what God has already made. And as far as humans are concerned, we can pass laws that permit us to identify as ducks and punish anyone who refers to us differently, but God has stamped everyone of the millions of cells in our bodies with one of only two genders that exist in all of the world throughout history – male or female.

When judgement comes, God will address you according to how He made you and will judge your soul based on your faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, as long as you're alive you can come to Him (no matter how far or broken or lost you are) and He will not only receive you with love and forgiveness but will never leave you or abandon you (Hebrews 13:5).

Thank you for your patience and attention concerning the topic of this sexually themed war, we as Christians are fighting. Don't be discouraged, in the end the light will reveal everything, and God will be honored by His coming. Amen, come quickly Lord Jesus.

10.

The Great Illusion

GAMBLING

I want to talk about the poor man's vice, gambling. I call it this because the rich rarely gamble because they know it leads to poverty. There are many forms of gambling and so many issues related to this activity that one chapter could not possibly do justice to this topic. So, I've decided to simplify things and break the lesson down to two parts:

1. I will briefly talk about internet gambling – the newest approach to gaming.
2. I will finish with a reminder and summary of what the Bible teaches us concerning this behavior.

I will also share some of my personal experiences with gambling in my own family.

INTERNET GAMBLING

When I searched on the internet back in 2001 for gambling sites, I found 800 (there may have been more) where one could gamble in various ways. Since online gambling is illegal in many places it's hard to get exact stats, however, just to demonstrate its growth, according to Americangambling.org, two thirds of the internet gaming operations are located in small Caribbean and Central American countries that provide

little or no government or legal oversight/control. For example, Antigua hosts 536 sites who pay a 3% tax to the government. Everything from sports betting on amateur to professional level games, to virtual casinos offering poker, roulette, and other forms of casino type games.

Total revenues for internet gambling alone have grown from \$300 million in 1998 to \$2 billion dollars in 2000; over \$10 billion by 2002 and growing to an incredible \$70 billion in 2020.

According to the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, gambling on the internet is especially enticing to youth, pathological gamblers and criminals. There is no mechanism at the moment that prevents minors from using a parent's credit cards to set up accounts at gambling sites.

Dr. Howard J. Shaffer, director of addiction studies at Howard University, likens the delivery system provided by internet gambling to gamblers to the improved delivery system "crack" cocaine provided to the drug addict who was using "coke." Crack was cheaper, faster, and more powerful than the old ways of ingesting cocaine. In the same way, internet gambling is faster, the payoff is immediate, the variety of games is endless and it is brought to you in the privacy of your own home.

Of course, some may be asking themselves, "Isn't gambling illegal in the U.S. and Canada?" The answer is yes and no.

Gambling is illegal in the U.S./Canada unless it is regulated by an individual state/providence. Therefore, every state has various statutes regulating the type and extent of gambling permitted in any one place. For example, in the state of Oklahoma gambling is legal on Native American reservations.

As I said, most gambling sites on the internet are primarily based in the Caribbean and other out of the way locations and are unlicensed, untaxed and unregulated by any state or federal agency. Under existing federal law, it is still unclear if web gambling sites are legal and for this reason a push has been made to create legislation that would regulate some, and ban most other gambling sites on the internet. In the U.S., Washington has debated a bill aimed at resolving this problem.

The Internet Gambling Prohibition Act (S.3322) has had mixed success in winning the approval necessary to legally stop internet gambling . It has been watered down and even its new version failed to win a 2/3 majority necessary to overcome a veto. Both the Trump administration (with Trump a former casino owner) and the present administration have not placed this issue very high on their legislative agenda, if at all.

When was the last time you read an article or speech dealing with this issue? The fight against gambling in general and internet gambling specifically is not a high-profile political issue. There have been blue ribbon panels who have studied the effects of gambling (including web gambling) on society in general and their report and recommendations were included in the "National Gambling Impact Study Commission" paper. This was a blueprint used by legislators, policy makers and social service groups to help minimize the negative impacts of gambling, not eliminate it.

The government wants to regulate gambling so it can minimize the negative (meaning costly negative effects) that always result from this activity. Governments at every level are reluctant to eliminate gambling or alcohol or marijuana today because people are going to use these products and be involved in these behaviors anyways, so why not legalize and tax them with the hope that the negative effects on the population not outweigh the benefits of financial profit in the long run.

Therefore, aside from various laws protecting minors from getting access to online gambling and restricting the advertising for gambling sites in poor neighborhoods, most of the remedial work/help provided for those who have become addicted to gambling comes from social and religious counselors, many of which are online – just like the gambling sites. One such site is:

National Problem Gambling

ncpgambling.org

1-800-255-4700

Gambling sites recruit their customers like any other business, they advertise – by word of mouth; banner ads on various sites; cross

promotion on other gambling sites; email and text distribution with special offers, bonus packages and enticements. Once you're there, the game gets into your blood and before you know it, you're a customer for life. It is an addiction, just like drugs, porn or alcohol. They all work in the same manner. Gambling, however, has hundreds of locations, thousands of opportunities to gamble anonymously, easily, comfortably, endlessly or until you lose all you have. We've touched on some of the legal and social service approaches being made to deal with this growing problem/addiction.

Let us now examine what the Scripture teaches about gambling.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

It would be so much easier to talk and decide what we should do about gambling if the Bible simply said, "Thou shall not gamble."

This would be cut and dried, an unarguable position for all to see. The only choice would be to obey or disobey.

Unfortunately, the Bible rarely mentions the word gamble or gambling and does not have any references to horse racing and casinos or internet gaming. Of course, it does not have the words pedophile, drug addiction or spousal abuse either but that does not mean that the Bible doesn't have something to say about these types of activities.

The Bible is not simply a rule book about do's and don'ts – it is more than that. The Bible is a book that talks about the relationship that exists between God and man. How God loves and has acted towards mankind in creating a holy relationship with human beings, and how mankind has and should respond to God in that holy relationship.

One of the ways that we respond to God is by honoring Him with our lives as Christians: "*You shall be holy for I am holy.*" 1 Peter 1:16; Romans 12:12.

Part of this holy living is reflected in the effect we have on society. How we impact it with our examples, our speech as well as our decisions. Thankfully, we live in a country where our decisions make a difference in

what happens in society. Lincoln expressed this idea when he said that government was of the people, by the people and for the people. As Christians living in America, we have a unique responsibility. With our votes and our voices we are responsible for promoting laws and social policies that honor God, things that are good and holy.

This is where this issue of gambling of all kinds comes in. Is this culture of gambling and the government's participation in it activities that will honor God and serve the people for good?

From a Christian's perspective, I don't think so and I'd like to give you three reasons why.

THREE NO'S IN CASINO

Let's use online casino gambling for our example.

1. No Luck in Casino Gambling

The big draw to gambling is that you could be the "lucky" one to win big. Others just like you have hit big and so could you! First of all, let me tell you that there is no such thing as luck. The concept of luck is a product of magic and the occult. The idea is that with special words, or special objects (a rabbit's foot, medal, lucky t-shirt, etc.) you can manipulate unseen spiritual forces to work in your favor. This is a staple idea of witchcraft.

However, as Christians, we know that all blessings come from God, whether we acknowledge this or not. There is no luck (manipulation of the spirits for our advantage) in gambling. There is simply a predetermined number of winners and losers.

- A. Lotteries are 1 in 1 million or more (statistically 10 million to 1 is equal to zero chance).
- B. The ratio is about one winner and nine losers for every ten players in casinos and horse racing.

- C. Sometimes the ratio is changed to attract new players, but it is never for the player's advantage.

Gambling is structured in such a way that 90% of the players lose 100% of the time. Luck has nothing to do with it and it's definitely not a blessing when 100% of the people who play in the casinos will lose 90% of the time.

Don't, therefore, believe the advertising, there is no luck when the game is programmed in such a way that 9 out of 10 people will lose 100% of the time. The advertising makes you believe in luck, but the reality is that the overwhelming odds are against you.

2. No Good in Casino Gambling

The main political argument for legalizing gambling is that the state will have additional revenue and it will contribute to lowering taxes. This is seen as a "good" thing. Gambling in any form has been proven over and over again not to benefit people in general. There is no upside to gambling. The first seventeen states to legalize gambling in the United States have reported that the net revenue generated by this activity has contributed only 7/10 of 1% to their gross state revenues. Gambling brings in some revenue but the little revenue it does bring in is not worth the problems it creates and attracts:

- Most common reason public officials are indicted in the U.S. is on gambling related charges – bribes and kickbacks.
- Gambling attracts criminals. Organized crime operates in and around gambling.
- Crime increases as gambling does. (Minnesota's crime rate went up 40% after legalized gambling came in.)
- Legalized gambling promotes more, not less private gambling. Compulsive gambling increases white collar crime. 40% of fraud and other forms of white-collar crime are a result of compulsive gambling.

- Those hurt the most by gambling are the ones who can afford it the least – the poor.

A study done in Quebec (a province of Canada - 6.5 million population) showed that the majority of their lottery players used welfare or social security checks to buy tickets. The government was recycling its own money through gambling! Most of the money the state receives from gambling must be reinvested to regulate and police this industry. This, of course, does not include the money spent on dealing with the broken families, crimes and ruined lives that come as a result of gambling.

It is immoral for a government to promote something which encourages the worst instinct of its people (greed – easy money at the expense of others).

"Do not rob the poor because he is poor."
- Proverbs 22:22

Good government seeks the best for its people, not something that can enslave and ruin them. Gambling is not good public policy for the people, especially the weak and the poor.

3. No Such Thing as a Christian Gambler

Christians are "salt" and "light" in the world (Matthew 5:13-14). This means that we are to exemplify what is best in what we say, do and what we promote. We don't agree with and can't control everything that goes on in the world. God has not put us here to win elections or referendums or establish policy. He knew we would always be a minority in the world and as such would probably not have much political or military clout. However, God has put the church on earth to be the pillar and support of the truth (I Timothy 3:15).

- A. Our job is not to win elections but to win hearts to Jesus Christ.
- B. Our job is not to make laws that govern the people but warn the people which laws are contrary to the law of God.

- C. Our job is not to accommodate the world and its activity, but to renounce ungodliness in all of its forms and live holy lives that give honor to God and a witness of faith to the world.

Christians who gamble (whether it is for a little or a lot) are like lights hidden away under a bed and salt that has no taste – useless for the purpose that God created them. Gambling, regardless of how it is dressed up:

- As entertainment – Las Vegas
- Professional sport betting – Bingo at the Lodge Hall
- Horse racing – Friday night poker

is part of the world, part of the kingdom of darkness and Christians who want to honor God have no part in it and neither do they support it in any way.

SUMMARY

I think I can speak with authority about gambling for several reasons:

1. The research on the effects of gambling on society has shown in every single instance that the negatives far outweigh the positives. History has demonstrated over and over again that gambling hurts many and profits only a few (politicians and operators).

2. The Bible describes quite clearly the lifestyle, ministry and attitude of Christians:

- winning money at games of chance
- trying to increase one's wealth at the expense of someone else's loss
- promoting a proven social ill

are not things that Christians do or support in their effort to honor God and love their fellow human beings.

I can also talk with authority on this subject because...

3. My father, Tony, was a compulsive gambler.

He did a lot of things in his life, but for the last ten years of it he was a bookie. What was ironic was that he would see people lose their money all day long by betting on horses and then with the money he made from their gambling losses, he would go play cards at night and lose it all himself! Here was a man who made (in today's dollars) \$2000-\$3000, per week, but because of his compulsive gambling:

- We never owned a car or a house.
- There was never any money for vacations or college.
- My mother had to work in order to guarantee that our rent was paid and there were adequate groceries.

On the night he died in 1962 he left the house after supper with \$4,000 cash in his pocket (that's \$35,000 in today's money). When he came home later that night and succumbed to a heart attack, he had no money left on him, dead at 53 years of age. My mother figured that Tony had simply had a very bad night at the poker table.

Don't get me wrong, I loved my dad, he was kind and generous, affectionate and always proud of me, but he had this thing, this gambling sickness that probably killed him and left my mother I destitute after he died. So, I will never be convinced of the good, the fun, the advantages or the morality of gambling in any of its forms.

11.

Genetic Engineering: Playing God

PART 1

One of the most controversial topics in our society today has to do with genetic engineering. The base science for this study is molecular biology of the gene. This science is involved in:

- The discovery of the method to recognize, describe, handle, and change the basic units of life.
- Every living thing is made up of genes and each living thing has its own genetic blueprint or "code" which dictates what it is.
- Scientists have found ways to not only describe these genes but to manipulate the codes and recently, to artificially reproduce the codes. This is called genetic engineering.

Many scientists agree that the last great scientific age was the nuclear age. The nuclear age was especially important because along with it mankind gained the greatest power for destruction or human benefit in history.

Scientists are now saying that the "genetic" age is now the greatest scientific breakthrough. Now the potential for danger and destruction is even greater because our power is no longer over inanimate objects (like the nuclear age) but over human life itself.

As Christians we need to understand not only the issues and problems inherent in the field of genetic engineering, but we must also be able to give an intelligent response explaining what the Bible may say about these things. The church has been given the responsibility to be the pillar and support the "truth" (I Timothy 3:15). This means that our job is to speak the truth (according to God's Word – "thy word is truth" – John 17:17) as it pertains various social issues. Whether people accept it or not, believe and follow the teaching or not, is not the point – we must proclaim the truth as the dividing line between truth and error and let the world choose where it will stand, on this and all issues, God will judge.

GENETIC ENGINEERING – OVERVIEW

Before we can give an opinion concerning a matter from a Biblical perspective, I think it is necessary for us to understand the issue itself. So, let us begin with a brief summary of the terms used in this field and some of the issues raised by the practice of genetics. There are two types of genetic research:

A. Genetic Modification

This involves minor modifications in existing structures by splicing new genes into the DNA or "code." For example:

- Improving a certain vegetable's resistance to insects by reworking its DNA or code, or adding a booster to the code.
- Providing a higher yield of rice or several crops of wheat by restructuring its reproductive code. (Things grow according to their code, change the code and you change the way it grows).
- Using this technology to fight disease within the body of humans or animals.

All of these genetic modifications, if used within the proper guidelines, can benefit mankind in many ways, and for now, the danger of moral and ethical problems is still not great.

Another product of genetic engineering...

B. Creation of New Life Forms (Human Engineering)

This type of research and practice goes beyond minor changes to inanimate objects. The genetic engineering that searches to create new life forms or alter existing ones is filled with dangerous moral and ethical situations. It will be this type of "human" engineering that we will review more closely and try to provide Biblical guidelines for.

HUMAN ENGINEERING AND THE BIBLE

Human engineering can occur at any one of these points:

- Before conception
- At conception
- Prenatally
- Postnatally

The various forms and practices fall into these four categories.

1. Human Engineering Before Conception

Prior to conception there are three areas involved in human engineering:

- Contraception** – the preventing of conception using a variety of methods, some acceptable (condemns, birth control pills, etc.) some not acceptable (abortion, morning after pill, etc.).
- Sterilization** – tubal ligation, vasectomies.
- Genetic Screening** – the ability of doctors to predict the probability of certain diseases in children born to certain sets of parents by studying the genetic make-up of the parents.

This is useful in various ways:

- Parents with a high probability of producing sick or handicapped children can either be treated or precautions can be taken with the pregnancy itself to avoid or treat the illness.
- If the illness or deformity is a high risk, parents may seek alternative ways to have a family (adoption) or wait for a solution medically.
- Screening during pregnancy also provides some opportunity for preventive care for sick or deformed babies.

The potential problem with genetic screening is that many times the doctors will recommend abortion as a solution. For example:

- If parents have a screening that has a risk, they are encouraged to go ahead and try anyway and if the child is ill or deformed it can always be aborted.
- If a mother is found to be carrying a deformed child, she has the opportunity of aborting earlier.

Genetic engineering can help parents avoid the burden of conceiving ill or deformed children; it can alert doctors to early treatment and prevention. It can prepare parents in the event that they are about to have a sick child, however, as Christians we cannot support the idea of abortion as a way of dealing with ill or handicapped children.

"Thou shall not commit murder."
- Exodus 20:13

2. Human Engineering at Conception

We've discussed human engineering before conception, now let us talk about human engineering at conception. Human engineering at conception takes four forms:

- A. Artificial insemination

- B. In-vitro fertilization
- C. Gene editing
- D. Cloning

We will discuss the first three in this section and save cloning for the next section.

A. Artificial Insemination

One of the most difficult problems a good marriage can face is the inability to have children. For example, Roger and Diane – married fifteen years, two attempts at adoption, many prayers and finally get pregnant naturally. Not all are blessed in this way. People become desperate and try many methods: fertility drugs, adoption or foster care.

Sometimes the drugs don't work and the struggles and expenses of adoption are overwhelming. For many people their last two options are to either remain childless or resort to artificial means. One of these artificial methods is called artificial insemination. Most couples who turn to this method, usually referred to as AI, because the husband is the one who is infertile.

Women tend to have more fertility problems than men but in 10-15% of cases, men are the ones who are infertile because of:

- Low sperm count
- Faulty sperm
- Poor ejaculation
- Impotency

When these problems are the cause of the infertility, doctors may recommend artificial insemination. There are a variety of ways to do this and not all are acceptable for Christians:

AIH – Where the husband's sperm is collected, treated and artificially paired to his wife's egg. This is acceptable because the same parents in

the marriage are donating their own reproductive materials with some technological assistance, to produce their child. They continue to be one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

AID/AIDH – Here someone else's sperm (donor) or a mixture of the donor or husband's sperm are mixed and added to the woman's egg. This is unacceptable because the basic "one flesh" unity called upon by God is violated. This is not adultery because there is no lust, no lying, no breaking of the marriage vow. This way to produce a child violates a more primal law – the original law that existed before adultery was even possible – the law or principle of one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

When we introduce someone else's sperm or egg, other than our spouse's, we break that one flesh unity that was set as the basis for creating a family. It's not always an easy decision but it's not worth violating God's law to produce a child when there exists other ways of obtaining children in our society.

B. In Vitro Fertilization

Another form of human engineering at conception is called "in vitro" meaning (in glass) refers to the practice of combining a sperm and an egg outside of the woman's body and then when the egg is fertilized, placing it inside the woman to complete the pregnancy. This is a difficult procedure and theoretically would be acceptable from a Biblical context if the husband and wife's sperm and egg were used and placed in her thus preserving the one flesh principle.

The "in vitro" procedure does have some potential for good:

- Childless couples could have their own children.
- This technology could be used to breed better animals thus improving the quantity and quality of food available.

This procedure also has several troubling factors as well.

- The one flesh principle could be violated as any sperm and egg could be used to produce a child.
- Providing "random" children in this way goes against the Biblical principle of the family. Children are the product of love, commitment, spiritual blessing – not just some lab experiment.

Children are a gift from the Lord,
they are a reward from heaven.
- Psalm 127:3

Human beings could be produced simply to provide body parts for other human beings. Surrogate motherhood and fatherhood reduces a human being's essential nature to that of a machine. It violates the order of the family. Just because we can do something, doesn't mean we should. We have compelling reasons, we have the technology to do it, but we don't always have the right!

This "in vitro" production also destroys life because many of the embryos are destroyed during research, many are disposed of because they are deformed or not usable anymore. This has been the debate over stem-cell research done with embryos and not only violates Biblical laws against killing but also goes against basic principles of medical ethics as well. For example:

1. Medical ethics states that a subject must be informed of a treatment or medication's risk to his health and give informed consent. These embryos, these humans are not consulted, they are conceived and killed in a dish, to provide experiments or body parts for someone else.
2. Basic ethics requires that the testing should be to the subject's advantage. To create a life simply to destroy it or provide a body part for another is not to the subject's advantage or good.

The Bible promotes family, the having and raising of children – but not at the cost of destroying human life in the process, and not if it violates the "one flesh" principle in marriage. A human life, whether it is conceived

naturally or produced with the assistance of genetic engineering, is still a life in the image of God and worthy of respect, care and the right to live!

The most recent human engineering process...

C. Gene Editing (W.S.J – February 20-21/21 – W. Isaacson)

The newest kind of genetic engineering is gene editing or what's called CRISPR. Developed by the Berkley biochemist, Jennifer Doudna, who won a Nobel prize in 2020 for her work. Dr. Doudna and her team adopted the system that created a genetic tool that can edit human DNA. DNA is the short form name for the molecule that contains the genetic code of organisms. DNA is in each cell of, for example a human being and tells cells what proteins to make. DNA is the blueprint that dictates who you are (male/female), tall, black, thin, brown eyes, etc. It also contains the information that dictates future blindness, handicaps, and certain genetic diseases. What Dr. Doudna developed was a way to edit out those destructive genes as well as edit favorable ones.

The net result of this technology is that:

- A. We can remove the potential for handicaps and diseases before birth.
- B. We can create "designer babies" selecting gender, eye and hair color, even levels of body strength and enhanced mental capabilities – the age of the "Superhuman" is here!

Of course, as much suffering as the technology can eliminate is matched, and I believe, surpassed by its potential for foolishness and evil (think designer babies or genetically programmed armies.).

The danger to the human race is brought on by tinkering with the actual building blocks designed by God for human life. Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should. This is quite a powerful tool to be used by weak, sinful and in many cases, unbelieving people.

12.

Genetic Engineering: Playing God

PART 2

In the last chapter we briefly looked at the science of genetic engineering. I said that this was a method of describing and manipulating the genetic codes (or blueprints) for inanimate as well as living things. For example:

Genetic modification is a procedure where vegetables are modified to produce more resistant or higher yield types. Creation of new life forms, however, isn't beyond this type of research and includes the manipulation of the codes for animals and humans in order to alter life or produce it. This causes ethical and moral problems.

Previously, we discussed human engineering and how it was practiced at four points in the life cycle:

1. Before Conception

- Contraception
- Sterilization
- Genetic screening

These are acceptable, as long as they do not include abortion as an option.

2. At Conception

- Artificial insemination
- "In vitro" fertilization

These are also acceptable as long as the "one flesh" principle is respected, and no embryos are intentionally killed.

- Gene editing – production of designer babies
- Cloning – we will discuss in this section

3. Prenatal

4. Postnatal

The point made about all of these issues was that as Christians, we need to understand what was being done and have intelligent arguments in defense of these things so we can render an answer which demonstrates that we understand the issue and can respond from a Biblical perspective (knowing what's right from wrong according to scripture).

HUMAN ENGINEERING – CLONING

The English word "clone" comes from the Greek word *Klon* which means a sprout or a twig. Basically, it refers to the asexual process of reproduction. For many of earth's life forms cloning, the asexual reproduction that results in the exact genetic duplicate of the original, is both natural and harmless.

An example of this is the blob-like amoeba which reproduces itself by splitting into two parts, it is essentially cloning itself. Cloning, then, is a way of growing many identical cells or organisms from a single ancestor, and is part of the creation.

For a time, the only artificial cloning possible was with plants. Then in 1952 Dr. Briggs and King of the Cancer Research Institute in Philadelphia cloned a leopard frog. As late as 1979 researchers were being quoted in journals that it was not possible to clone mammals. However, almost twenty years later Dr. Ian Wilmut and other scientists at the Roslin Institute in Scotland succeeded in cloning a female sheep, an ewe. The first mammal ever successfully cloned.

1. The Procedure

In the simplest of terms this is what he did:

- **Step 1** – He took a cell from the udder of one ewe and placed it in a solution which deactivated its growth mechanism. This means he kept the cell alive but made it dormant so it wouldn't reproduce.
- **Step 2** – He took an egg cell from another ewe and removed its nucleus (including its DNA)
- **Step 3** – He fused these together. He did this by placing these two cells next to each other and passing a current of electricity through them in order to get them to merge – and they did. What was so new was not so much the fusing of nuclei. What was discovered was that an adult cell could revert to its embryonic stage and fire up all of its original "codes" in order to reproduce itself.
- **Step 4-5** – The last two stages were to implant the fused cell (code cell and receiver cell) into a third animal for a gestation period. When the animal was born (called Dolly) it was the exact duplicate of its mother only.

Only the female had provided its code, fired up in a receiver cell, carried by a third animal, producing one animal from another. In normal reproduction the fusing of the male with female codes produces offspring which shares traits of both. In cloning, an artificial method of firing up a

code is done and what is produced is the exact duplicate of the cloner of the code. One of the parents is reproduced, not a combination of both.

2. Good and Bad Cloning

Like any scientific discovery, this process can be used in a variety of ways either for good or evil. Unfortunately, the stakes are much higher with cloning because what we are experimenting with here are the basic building blocks of life itself not just the ability to go fast or produce some kind of better plastic.

When it comes to cloning animals there is the argument that a method that can produce a better type of animal – more resistant to disease, yielding a higher rate of food or milk and other products is a benefit to mankind and not a violation of Scripture.

As a matter of fact, Genesis 1:28 says that man was to "be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it." With the ever-increasing population of the world, these breakthroughs in producing better and more profitable plants and animals are in line with God's commands to subdue the creation and be wise stewards of our resources. The problem occurs when we enter the area of Eugenics (the power of developing a better race of humans through selection and genetic engineering).

The possibility of doing with humans what we have done with animals (cloning a genetic double of only one person without the normal sexual act to produce conception) is incredible and frightening. For example:

- A. Cloning to provide children to infertile couples or unmarried people. Homosexuals are especially eager for this.
- B. Cloning to provide body parts for future use – i.e. a body farm.
- C. Cloning to produce a "super" race where only the brightest and the best are reproduced and those who don't make the grade are not allowed to live.

- D. The evolutionary nightmare where the false theory of evolution becomes social policy driven by human engineering.
- E. Cloning to produce a private work force (slaves) or private army (military slaves).

What does the Bible say about these things? When viewed in light of these new scientific possibilities we learn that the Scriptures do not have a specific command or prohibition but rather provides guidelines which teach and help us decide where the lines should be drawn. When it comes to eugenics the issue is not if it can be done but rather should it be done. Scientists are moving rapidly towards the time when they will succeed in cloning a human being and move on to experiment with other factors in the eugenics process – but should they? The simple answer is no! For example, they had the ability to build the great tower of Babel, but they shouldn't have and were punished for it (Genesis 11:1-9).

REASONS WHY WE SHOULD NOT PURSUE HUMAN CLONING.

1. Act of Idolatry

"You shall have no other gods before Me."
- Exodus 20:3

Human cloning assumes that man is in charge of himself and of his own destiny. It is the belief that we can improve on the human condition and the "humanness" or humanity as it has been given by God. Man is trying to take God's position in manipulating and ordering "human" existence.

2. Act of Disobedience

God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the

fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

- Genesis 1:28

Man has no authority to cross over the line from manipulation of created things and animals to the level of human life. God permits man to subdue and manipulate the creation, but He has not permitted the same with life created in His image. We are to love each other, care for each other and so medical procedures or transplants are beneficial as well as acceptable because they serve this end. However, cloning for whatever purpose is not supported by any Biblical teaching directly or indirectly.

3. Violates the One Flesh Principle

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

- Genesis 2:24

Reproduction is the result of something specific – the love and commitment of two individuals. Children are not lab experiments or produced for a scientific or social "reason" – they are the byproduct of the love between a man and a woman (not just by one of them). The one flesh principle exists, not only to guard the essential nature of Godly human relations (sex), but also family, social structure, as well as the spiritual, emotional, and sexual health of human beings. Whenever we violate it in any way, the consequences are negative (spiritually it's sin, physically it can lead to all kinds of human problems).

4. Leads to Abortion

When humans are mass produced, produced as animals, the value of life decreases and it becomes easier to dispose of faulty ones. The command not to kill includes violating one's right to freedom and life. When one is produced exclusively to profit another, or for one's body parts – we are guilty of destroying that person's life. The total opposite of this command is to love others as we love self (Matthew 22:39). Producing lab babies is not motivated by love in any way.

As I said, just because we shouldn't doesn't mean we won't. If it does happen, the question is, "Will it have a soul?" "Will it be human?" The answer is, yes. What doctors are doing is not creating life, they are altering the way life is produced. God has imbedded life with His image, and a human soul. All human lives, therefore, have these qualities whether produced by fusing a sperm and the egg or tricking the human cell into reproduce itself.

Scientists say that human clones will be genetically identical to their donors, but as fully adult, they will be different, just like identical twins are different. One thing is certain, human clones will be fully human and as such will require love as well as the gospel of salvation for their sins. However, human cloning is still prohibited by law in the United States.

PRENATAL / POSTNATAL MANIPULATION

The final two forms of human engineering are not as scientifically spectacular as cloning but represent man's attempt, once again, at controlling or manipulating human life.

1. Prenatal Manipulation

This is a form of screening but done when the woman is pregnant. The most common form of screening is done through a process known as amniocentesis. A needle is inserted through the abdominal wall and some amniotic fluid is removed for testing and screening. This is fluid is treated and studied, and from it doctors can determine if the baby will suffer from any number of diseases.

Once the diagnosis is complete and a disease or malformation is detected doctors may offer one of four options:

- A. Allow the child to be born as is
- B. Abort
- C. Attempt genetic surgery or treatment
- D. Use a fetal blood transfusion

This new technology enables parents to either treat unborn children who may suffer from disease or malformations or prepare for children born handicapped in some way. Unfortunately, a large number of people choose the seemingly easier route of abortion to relieve them of this problem. This is not the fault of this particular science, but this procedure has led to more abortions because of the moral weakness of our society.

2. Postnatal Manipulation

Many times, the genetic screening is incorrect or parents without this information give birth to babies with various health or mental defects. In cases like these there have been situations where doctors have simply allowed the babies to die by withholding food or treatment.

Defenders of this practice say that if an infant does not possess potential for human relationships, its life has no value. (Richard McCormick, Kennedy Center for bioethics research). Sir Francis Crick, Nobel Prize winner said, "*no newborn infant should be declared human until it has passed certain tests regarding its genetic endorsement and if it fails these tests it forfeits the right to live.*" The idea is that if a baby is retarded or too mangled it does not deserve to live and the best thing for all concerned is to allow it to die or kill it.

Of course, this thinking may please those who have to pay for care and relieve the family and society of a great burden. Once again, many compelling reasons, but not the "right" to do these things. Human beings do not have the right to knowingly and purposefully end the life of an innocent person. Many times, these decisions are motivated not by what is right, but by what is less expensive, easier or convenient because we are selfish.

13.

Prejudice and the Bible

In this final chapter I want to talk to about the problem of prejudice in its various forms and what the Bible teaches about this sin. Time and space will not permit me to deconstruct every movement in our society focused on some form of prejudice. However, I would like to state what the Bible says about the subject of prejudice, a sin that predates the founding of this nation.

First of all, the word 'prejudice' means to pre-judge or to decide in advance. In other words, you judge, usually in a negative way, based on insufficient, limited, or faulty evidence.

There are many kinds of prejudice (gender, handicaps, age, education, economic standard, culture, political or religious views etc.) just to name a few. The one causing much strife today is social prejudice. This occurs when someone makes a negative judgement about someone based solely on their culture, usually something false or stereotypical. For example:

- Mexicans are lazy and ignorant
- Whites are naturally prejudice – most popular one today.
- Blacks are criminals and untrustworthy.
- French are snobs and cowards.

- All Asians are good at math.
- All students are radicals.
- All politicians are liars.
- The police want to kill black men.
- Christians are hypocrites.
- Women of color are sexually immoral.
- All news media lie or tell the truth.

There are, therefore, many types of prejudices in the world but for the sake of time I'm going to focus on racial/cultural prejudice because this is the form of prejudice most often mentioned in the Bible.

Of course, the teaching on social prejudice in the Bible can also be applied to other forms of prejudice as well.

It also responds well to the latest argument concerning racism called "critical race theory," a theory that declares that all white people are racist oppressors and are unconsciously biased against all other races, especially people of color.

This "theory" is based on declarations, assumptions and manipulation of language, and in response it would do us well to review what the Bible teaches about racism and prejudice.

PREJUDICE IN THE BIBLE

⁵ Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; ⁶ and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

- Exodus 19:5-6

The Jewish people, in time, mis-interpreted this to mean that only they were to be with God and that they were to look down on others as

unworthy. What God wanted from the Jews was that by their holy living and rich blessings, they would be a light to non-believers and draw them to Him, not push them away.

Although God did not permit the Jews to worship pagan gods, or marry pagan women, He did not forbid social contact with Gentiles (how else could they win them?). Jewish rabbis, however, created such strict rules that by the time of Jesus, people would take baths in order to "cleanse" themselves in case they came in contact with non-Jews in the marketplace, they would even cross the street to avoid their shadow crossing their own.

Jewish people loved and helped their own but were taught to condemn and despise anyone else who wasn't Jewish. This is the situation the apostles faced when they began to preach the gospel among the Gentiles.

NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON PREJUDICE

The New Testament doesn't have a passage that says, "Thou shalt not be prejudice." Rather, it gives other general commands and examples that tell us how a Christian deals with this issue.

1. The Command / Teaching

"In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

- Matthew 7:12

Every form of prejudice goes against this rule. The reason for the teaching is twofold:

- A. God is a loving being and He treats everyone with love regardless of who or what they are. As believers and disciples, He wants us to have His attitude.

- B. Everyone is a descendant of Adam and so no one culture or race is superior to another. Modern genetic research has shown this to be true.

Different cultures began to evolve when God separated the people and gave them different languages – the story behind this is the following:

¹ Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words. ² It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. ³ They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. ⁴ They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." ⁵ The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. ⁶ The Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

- Genesis 11:1-9

Early in man's history, everyone spoke the same language up until and a little after Noah and the flood. Some believed the one language spoken was an ancient form of Hebrew. God told them to spread out and populate the earth, but they refused and instead stayed in one place and started building this huge monument, which represented their earthly kingdom, where they could worship idols.

In order to stop them God made them speak different languages. This naturally confused the people and stopped the building of the tower (because they couldn't understand each other). These types of buildings are called ziggurats and there are still some types of these ancient towers in the Middle East. With time the people began to reorganize into groups who spoke the same language and drifted away from each other to different parts of the earth. The tower was called Babel, which means "to mix."

As these groups separated, the variety in climate, food, customs and the in-breeding they experienced created the genetic differences in physical appearances we see today. There are some very different looking, sounding and acting people on the earth but their differences are the result of thousands of years of different experiences, however, the Bible tells us that at one time all people were the same because they all came from one man and woman.

In the church, people have not always believed this to be so, for the U.S. and Europe there was a time when some Christians believed that the Bible taught that people of color were inferior.

In Genesis 9:18-27 God put a curse on Ham (Noah's son) because he was disrespectful to his father.

¹⁸ Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

²⁰ Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. ²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness. ²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what

his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵ So he said,
"Cursed be Canaan;
A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers."
²⁶ He also said,
"Blessed be the Lord,
The God of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant.
²⁷ "May God enlarge Japheth,
And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;
And let Canaan be his servant."

In time, the nations in parts of the Middle East and Africa were believed to be descended from Ham (blacks). Some people mistakenly assumed that the curse meant that his ancestors would be inferior (i.e. blacks inferior to whites). The true curse, however, was that Ham would not win or become more prosperous than his brothers, not that his descendants would be inferior. This is how many people in the U.S. and Britain excused the practice of slavery for many years and still felt that they were good Christians.

Therefore, first thing the Bible teaches us about prejudice is that it goes against God's basic law to love and treat others like self because God is love and we all come from Adam.

2. The Example of Jesus - Luke 10:30-37

The Old Testament specifically taught that all men were created from one man and then later in Exodus 19:5-6 that's God's people were to specifically not make any distinctions.

If this wasn't enough, Jesus in the New Testament gives us the example that teaches us about the equality of people and how Christians should treat everyone.

The parable of the "Good Samaritan" shows that Christians are not to treat anyone as inferior.

³⁰ Jesus replied and said, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead. ³¹ And by chance a priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

³² Likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, ³⁴ and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' ³⁶ Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" ³⁷ And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

- Luke 10:30-37

Some background facts:

- Samaritans were hated by Jews because they were half-breeds (part Jewish, part foreign, pagan nation).
- If priests and Levites touched dead bodies, they would not be able to serve at the temple without going through a special ritual of cleansing, it would be an inconvenience.
- Note, they were heading away from Jerusalem.
- We don't know what the victim was, just that he was a victim.

The point is that your "neighbor" is everybody, not just the person who looks, thinks, and believes like you. No one is inferior, no one is unworthy of receiving love, help, and compassion. Jesus died for everyone, black, white, and in between. We don't have equal gifts and abilities, but we are

equally valuable in God's eyes and worthy of love. Mission work sees every soul of equal value.

3. The Goal for Christians

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
- Galatians 3:26

In the world people either go to war with those who are different, or in a best-case scenario, they try to live in peace and accept each other as they are. In the church, however, we go one step further. Our goal in the church is not to win or just to tolerate each other or even live in peace – our goal in the church is to become one, to be united.

Once one becomes a Christian, his/her main identity is not man, woman, black, white, rich, or poor – the main identity is, "I am a Christian and I accept you because you are a Christian." This passage does not erase our differences, it calls on us to be united despite our differences. This is a better result than the division caused by the Critical Race Theory.

Therefore, prejudice is judging without knowing or criticism and rejection based on differences (skin, language, etc.). The Bible teaches:

- A. God loves all, we should love all.
- B. All people are related as humans and may have different abilities and opportunities, but all are equal and valuable.
- C. A Christian's goal is to love all people and be one with all Christians.

This brings us together and does not create more division and misunderstanding.

How to overcome prejudice if this is your problem:

1. Recognize that it's a sin and God will punish you for it. This is always good motivation to change your attitude.

2. Judge people on what you know, not just what you feel or what others have said, and judge them one at a time. No one person speaks for an entire race. Imagine if we judged white people based only on Hitler!
3. Realize that nobody is perfect. Everyone has weaknesses. Let's have mercy on others if you want them to have mercy on you.

The only prejudice you can eliminate in this world is your own. It begins with you, it begins today.

SUMMARY

Now, the main problem we as Christians face today is that we're accused of various kinds of prejudice because we reject certain types of behavior. For example, the Bible plainly teaches that homosexual practice is wrong because it is expressly forbidden by God (Romans 1:26-27, I Corinthians 6:9-10, I Timothy 1:9-10).

If we reject homosexual or any sexual practice that goes against Bible teaching (too many to mention) or say that practices that violate the one man and one woman for life principle of marriage, we're accused of being prejudice and called all of the phobic words for it. If it's gay sex among people of color, then we're racist.

Now, they could accuse us of being too prudish; overly zealous or self-righteous and at least their accusations would be in context. We are judging behavior that is forbidden by the Bible and since they don't accept the Bible as authority, they reject us as well as our conclusions rejecting their behavior. This goes for any behavior that is unbiblical in nature and practice:

- Lifting up one race over another (KKK, BLM)
- Lifting one gender over another (feminists, LGBTQ+)
- Lifting a political ideology over Christianity by force (communist, fascists)

- Lifting an ideology over that which maintains social order and peace (anarchists-ANTIFA, etc., SJW)

Accusing Christians of prejudice because we call out bad behavior that is anti-biblical, anti-spiritual, and downright sinful is just their way of shutting us up! There is no faster way of cancelling or shutting down a voice proclaiming the gospel or denouncing sin than by labelling that person a racist or being prejudice. What are we to do then? Don't be quiet and continue to speak out:

1. Speak out against prejudice and behave as God has taught us to behave. We are all equally valuable before God. This is the starting point for all human relationships.
2. Speak out and shine the light on bad behavior and false ideas that run contrary to God's Word. Paul says that the church is the pillar and support of the truth (I Timothy 3:15).

As Christians, we maintain the truth and serve God by declaring the truth about all matters even if that brings push-back and angry, but empty accusations or prejudice. In the end God, Who has the knowledge and the right to judge, will determine who spoke the truth and behaved according to His Word. So long as we follow His Word in how we act and what we say, we should have no fear of either man's or God's judgement.

In closing let me say that I hope that this book has been useful, informative, and edifying. God bless you as you seek to know His will and purpose for your life.

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