Holiness in an Unholy World  
I Thessalonians 4:1-8

Introduction

How do we decide what is right and what is wrong in sexual matters?

For the believer, the place where we start is with the word of God.

If we are going to live in a way that pleases the Lord, there are three things we must do.

I. We must avoid sexual immorality. Verses 1-3

In chapters 4-5, Paul will address 5 topics under the heading of living to please the Lord.

- Holiness (Sexual immorality). 4:1-8
- Love. 4:9-12
- What happens when we die? 4:13-18
- Congregational Matters. 5:12-22

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified (holy).”

Sanctification is the process where God makes us more and more like Jesus.

If we are to be holy, we must avoid sexual immorality.

Note how strongly Paul puts it.

- This is how we must live if we are to please the Lord. Verse 1
- These instructions are by the authority of the Lord Jesus. Verse 2
- This is God’s will. Verse 3
- To reject this is to reject God himself. Verse 8

Why is this so strong?

It is because this is a very serious matter and God cares deeply about you.

It is for our good.

II. We need to control our own body in a way that is holy and honorable. Verses 4-5

Holy means pleasing to God.

Honorable means respectful of others.
Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.
God gives us the power to do what he commands.
We are called to live in a way that pleases God.
It starts with our mind.

“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.” Job 31:1

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” James 5:16

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praise worthy – think about such things.” Philippian 4:8

III. Do not wrong your brother or sister. Verses 6-8

Sexual immorality doesn’t just hurt you. It hurts others too.

Premarital sex steals someone else’s virginity.

Adultery hurts your spouse and your children and very often breaks up another marriage and family.

Pornography and prostitution are not victimless crimes.

Sexual sin hurts our relationship with God and our witness to the world.

The Lord is the avenger of all such sins.

Conclusion

Sex within the bounds of marriage is holy and good.

Sex outside the bounds of marriage is destructive. It hurts our relationship with God, with others and with ourselves.

Make it your aim to please the Lord.

If you stumble and sin, confess it to God and ask for forgiveness.

If you struggle in this area, seek counsel, find an accountability partner, keep growing and draw on his power.