

## Aughnacloy, Ballymagrane, Clogherney & Sixmilecross Presbyterian Churches

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Dear Friends

As your minister, it is a great privilege that I have in bringing this weekly devotion to you. As we are reminded of God's word we have help for these days and to live for Him in these different times. *1 Corinthians 6:20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

I trust that you are all keeping safe and well. Many of us are beginning to get a bit fed-up with the Lockdown, social distancing, self-isolation and shielding. Remember, we all in this together, keep up the distancing and so on for the greater good of our communities, neighbours and friends. May God's word be an encouragement to us all as we reflect on the writing of Paul encouraging us to live a life of purity before God as we return to 1 Thessalonians and chapter 4:1-8. *Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no-one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

Today as we read these verses, we may realise that we are living in morally curious times. There are many similarities that we can draw between the first century church of Paul's day and today's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church. The morals of society around the church are very similar, in both settings society outside of the church are seeking to destroy the purity of the church. *1 Thessalonians 4:7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.*

We live in an age where impure relationships which violate God's promises are being given the protection of national law and are actively promoted as being the normal for society with the redefinition of marriage, when in fact we were created in the image of God and given a frame work for relationships from the very beginning of time.

As a Christian we are called to live a life of relational purity, as we do so, you will be considered an oddball or dinosaur. When you embrace the truth about Biblical marriage and relationships, you will be called worse names.

For some today, I may be one of those dinosaurs, as this subject is so foreign to what many people expose themselves to in the music many listen to, the movies, TV shows etc.

This may sound like from another planet, but Paul in his writing here wants you to see the reality of life from God's perspective, not the world's. 'Jesus is the way, the truth and the life'. John 14. God wants you to embrace the truth about relational purity.

Created for Relationship: God has a relationship for each of us, either singleness or marriage, both will be blessed by God as we would live in relationship with Him as Lord of our life. *Genesis 2:22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man." 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

No sooner had God set the foundation for life relationships in the closing verses of Genesis 2, then as Genesis 3 opens we read; *Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

Immediately Satan sets to work to destroy what God has created perfect.

Shared Relationship; Husband & Wife! Marriage is the most important institution in the world. Before God established nations or the church, he established marriage. The Bible begins with a marriage in a Garden and ends with a Wedding in Heaven, when Jesus the Bridegroom is united with the church, the Bride of Christ. It is to this end that Paul is guiding us for the purity of the church.

God has given us the gift of intimate relationship for our enjoyment and as a picture of His love for us. In the midst of our defence of traditional marriage, our concerns are also rooted in creation, redemption and a knowledge of God. As Paul writes in Ephesians 5, a husband and wife reflect Christ and His Church. A believer's marriage partner is not just their spouse, but a fellow believer in Christ.

*1 Thessalonians 4:4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no-one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.*

Scripture may not say much about intimate relationships which are contrary to His calling, but it is clear that intimacy in marriage is to be between one man and one woman. Being party to any other intimacy will be punished, excluded from God's Kingdom. God's word warns us. As Paul here sets the scene to talk to us about the second coming of Jesus in the remainder of this chapter.

From the beginning, God's plan was one man and one woman. God gave Adam only one wife.

By the time of the New Testament, one man married to one woman became the standard. Leaders in the church are to be husbands of one wife. *Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*

There may be folk reading this who are guilty of intimacy outside of the marriage bond. God continues to love you and He can rescue you from whatever sin you are involved with and forgive you, preparing you for His glory. He can forgive you and change you.

Purity is Essential to Walk with God! There are many characters recorded in the Bible as having made mistakes with intimacy. Lot committed incest. Abraham lay with his wife's handmaid. Rahab was a prostitute. David committed adultery with Bathsheba. These were real people, just like us. God forgave them. So if you've sinned in the past don't despair. God can forgive you.

Remember this phrase: Admit it; quit it; forget it.

Confess your sin to God. Refuse to continue that sin. Then accept His forgiveness and move on.

*1 Corinthians 6:20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

For thousands of years, the marriage between one man and one woman has been the stabilizing force in western nations. It has been the relationship through which generations have been connected.

Biblical marriage is the gold standard for a thriving, healthy culture. It has no equal among relationships. Embrace the truth from God's Word and make a commitment to live a life of relational purity!

#### Let us Pray

Loving Lord, we thank you for your everlasting love for all of your creation. We ask that people may have that courage to turn their life over to God and know His everlasting love and commitment, which enables all who trust to stand firm in the face of adversity.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all this day and forevermore? Amen.