

Christian Men, Fornication Is for Cowards

"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body." –1 Corinthians 6:18

I had an interesting heart-to-heart with my dad the other day. We were discussing my son, his grandson, who was spending time with my folks in Colorado over the summer. At the risk of bragging a bit—my boy, an eighth grader who recently turned 14, is already 6-foot-1, very handsome and a competitive Olympic-style boxer. Evidently, on the previous day a "drop-dead gorgeous" high school girl had made a sexual advance at him, and while as a Christian young man, he had managed to graciously rebuff that advance, he shared with his grandfather that "it was tempting."

Boy do I know it. Having been a teenage boy myself a few decades back I faced those same temptations on multiple occasions, and, regrettably, as I've shared before, both then and into my young adulthood, I succumbed to those temptations more often than not.

That fact is part of what my father and I were discussing. He grew up in West Texas where, as with much of the country today, it was considered machismo for men and teenage boys to rack up as many sexual conquests as possible. While he became a Christian just before he and my mother were married, the message I yet received from him was, with a wink and a nod, that "boys will be boys."

It's the old Don Juan double standard. What's good for me, ladies, is not good for thee. As the late comedienne Joan Rivers once quipped, "A man can sleep around, no questions asked, but if a woman makes 19 or 20 mistakes, she's a tramp."

Jokes aside, this double standard is real, and it's even embraced by much of the church today. I don't mean to blame my father. This was the exact message I wanted to hear as a hormonal teen. Even so, it was the wrong message. More importantly, I was wrong to use that message as a rationalization for my own sexual immorality. Today, my father and I are in full agreement on these points.

Here's the universal truth. God takes all sexual immorality very seriously, and any sexual conduct outside the "male and female" marriage covenant, as Christ exclusively defined it, is sexual immorality (see Matt. 19:4). It's sin. "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2).

Hebrews 13:4 makes God's expectation for us abundantly clear: "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

For everyone, Christ followers especially, sexual purity is not an option. As Ephesians 5:3 admonishes, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people."

This is serious stuff. So serious, in fact, that those who maintain an unrepentant, sexually immoral lifestyle face eternal separation from God. "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral (fornicators), nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality ... will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

During our conversation, my dad shared a recent exchange he had with an elderly pastor he sometimes visits. He was telling the pastor about his youthful sexual exploits and that even

today, though he knows it's wrong, he sometimes feels a tinge of pride about them because, in his hometown, the more a young man "scored" with the ladies, the more he was admired. Almost like a hero.

The pastor looked my father in the eye, stone-faced, and told him directly and without equivocation, "You were no hero. You were a coward."

Ouch. That's gonna leave a mark.

It cut to the quick, not just for my father, but for me as well. I'd never thought of it that way. In this world, the cowardly thing to do is to conform to this world. When it comes to sexual morality, and especially for young people in our sewer-like culture, what's difficult to do is the right thing to do.

And the right thing is to obey God.

Indeed, Jesus commands that we "flee from sexual immorality." In the face of danger, we think of fleeing as the coward's way out. But when we're fleeing from temptation, from sin, to take flight is to show courage. It's an act of righteousness.

Guys, fornication is cowardly. It's the easy way out. Women are not the objects of our pleasure. They are God's daughters, created in His own image and likeness. When we use them sexually, we dishonor them, our own bodies and their future husbands. It's theft. We're stealing a priceless gift reserved for another.

No, the courageous thing to do is to remain pure –especially in a culture that glorifies sexual impurity of every kind. It's courageous because it's difficult. It's courageous because with purity will come mockery and contempt. Young men, this is true especially for you. Even when I was a teen, boys who chose sexual abstinence were considered "sissies." They were weird.

But they weren't weird. What they were was obedient. What they were was courageous. What they were was honorable.

What they were was blessed.

"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death" (James 1:12-15).

Like I said, this is serious stuff.

"How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you" (Ps. 119:9-11).

Buck up, boys. Don't be a coward. Show some courage. Show some honor.

I wish I had.

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