

Christian Psychologist: Why God Won't Tolerate Sexual Sin

In the last two decades, the sexualization of our culture has grown exponentially. Never before in the history of the world has so much explicit material been available to so many people at the same time.

The devil has moved the porn store from the dark side of town directly to your cell phone. When it comes to corrupting the church of Jesus Christ, the enemy will stop at nothing.

Why? Why has this battle so intensified that anyone watching television will be sexually assaulted, or "slimed," within minutes of turning on the tube? Why do we celebrate sexual humor, suggestive language, open adultery and fornication? And why are so many Christian men watching it?

The "why" is an important question to ask. If a man wants to comprehend the pit he is in and the work it is going to take to become clean, he must understand the why. I remember having to know the "why" while I was in Bible college and seminary. I knew and understood the why of obeying God and helping people, therefore I could endure final exams, long nights and challenging professors.

Knowing the "why" behind staying clean will have a similar effect on you. It will give you strength in the fight for sexual purity. It is so easy to swim with the current in our present culture. But it takes real strength and courage to swim against it. You have the opportunity to be the one to lead others to a new clean life. A life free from lust. I know, because I have now been sexually pure for more than 30 years.

Nevertheless, let me take a step back in time and share something with you that forever changed my perspective. A

while back, I was quietly reading the Scriptures when something amazing happened. A verse suddenly jumped out at me. You know what I mean—one of those moments when time stands still and it appears as if the words are alive, coming off the page.

I became so excited I had to get up and walk around. I blurted out, “Oh wow, God, this is good, this is amazing.” Remember, I already had several degrees in theology, so I felt as if I had seen it all, knew every Scripture there was on sexual immorality. But this was different. I was now seeing exactly what the enemy was after with every person and church—and he could only get it through sexual compromise.

I’d like to walk you through this section of Scripture. It’s found in Revelation 2, where Jesus is speaking to the seven churches. It is important we understand God’s heart on this issue.

First of all, the apostle John was known for his love for Jesus. In fact, some might argue John had the closest relationship to the Lord of all the disciples or apostles. If this is true, then it is no wonder Jesus trusted John with perhaps the greatest revelation ever given to man.

In the opening chapters of Revelation, Jesus directs his comments to seven churches. Remember, throughout this entire section of Scripture, this is Jesus speaking—after the crucifixion in His permanent resurrected state as the Son of God. This is where the Lord opened up a section of Scripture to me that changed the way I see sexual sin. Bear with me as we explore these verses.

In the letter to the church in Thyatira, Jesus said:

“To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you

are now doing more than you did at first" (Rev. 2:18-19, NIV).

The opening of this letter is the easy part. Jesus praises the church for the positive things she is being and doing. The Lord repeats this pattern of opening each letter with encouraging words throughout this section of Scripture. Ironically, praise is crucial to recovery.

Why? It instills hope. Most men who struggle sexually have hidden their secret life of sin for so long, they are hounded by a tremendous fear of being found out. If their fear comes true, they may fall into a pit of despair.

By contrast, it is the Lord's nature to be gentle with His people, even when they are in sin. He truly is longsuffering. As the second chapter in Romans points out, "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4).

By offering praise, Jesus gently affirms His love for them.

He continues, "Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20).

The Lord now transitions into the real issue. It is inevitable. First, notice the use of the word "tolerate." It appears this church knew what was going on, but just looked the other way. Were the leaders of this church merely putting up with open immorality? Not only that, but the woman somehow worked her way into a position of authority—a self-made leader.

This situation isn't unique to the first century. We see the same thing happening today. Many pastors refuse to believe that the men, women and youth in their churches are viewing pornography and engaging in immoral sexual behaviors. Either

they simply don't want to believe it, or they are trapped by this same problem and feel a lack of credibility to address the problem.

Today, the word "tolerate" has reached an almost supreme level, as if it were a great virtue. I want to dispel this myth. No doubt, God is patient, and we are all living proof of His patience. However, God is not tolerant. Otherwise, Jesus would not have had to die for the sins of the world. The same things that upset Him in Genesis, upset Him throughout Scripture. Remember, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

God does not tolerate sexual sin. He never has and He never will. And there are plenty of good reasons for it.

This particular sin is very harmful on several levels. Not only does it destroy the individual's soul and spirit, but it also is an action very difficult to erase. Once you have an affair, you can never "undo it." It is now a part of you, forever. You can be forgiven, but you cannot erase past actions. It has dire effects on the family, causing divorce, child abandonment and a whole host of other unintended consequences. And when the family breaks down, whole societies break down.

That is why we find in the last book of the Bible—after the resurrection, Pentecost and years of church growth—that Jesus is still saying the same thing. He hasn't changed. Tolerance of this type of sin in our lives and in the local church is unacceptable. {eoa}

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