

# Scandals, Scoundrels and How to Treat Women

In 2017, we saw a tidal wave of sex scandals and shamed scoundrels. *USA Today* reported that over 135 prominent men have been accused of sexual harassment or misconduct since the Harvey Weinstein scandal broke in October. An epidemic of moral corruption has been exposed as big names have fallen like dominoes. The guilty should confess, repent and resign their leadership positions. The rest of us should search our hearts and pray God helps us keep our own noses clean. The church can't afford to stick our heads in the sand and ignore this issue if we wish to remain relevant. In response, we need to remind ourselves of biblical boundaries for sexual behavior and how Scripture says women should be viewed and treated.

Sadly, the sexual revolution of the 60s and 70s is still producing rotten fruit. Generations with no moral compass or restraint have sown to the wind and now we are reaping the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7). Many who have sown their wild oats are praying for crop failure, but an inescapable law is set in motion—"Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal. 6:7-8). Hollywood is partly to blame for this tsunami of immorality. The entertainment industry vomits a steady stream of sexually graphic TV shows and movies that portray women as sex objects. Pornography flows like an open sewer on the internet, and we wonder why sexual assaults and date rape are rampant on college campuses and in society. What do we expect? We, as a nation, have rejected God's Word, which provides proper boundaries for sexual conduct. We now live in an "anything goes" society.

God is certainly not anti-sex. After all, He invented it!

Sexuality is a special gift God designed for married couples to enjoy and express their mutual love. But He also established safeguards, not to deprive us of pleasure, but to protect us from disease, premature pregnancy, broken hearts, abuse, guilt and shame. Which would you prefer: A fence at the top of the cliff or an ambulance at the bottom? God's Word is the fence that prevents us from going over the cliff. While God will forgive and restore anyone who has failed morally if they repent, the adage is still true— "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." God is a master at restoration, but He prefers prevention and can keep us from falling in the first place if we cooperate (Jude 1:24). It's good to have a safety net; it's better not to need one.

The Bible is crystal-clear about sexual behavior—"Marriage is honorable among everyone, and the bed undefiled. But God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers" (Heb. 13:4). "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" (1 Thess. 4:3). It is inappropriate to touch anyone in a sexual way except your legal spouse. Though our sick society says otherwise, adultery, fornication, incest, homosexuality, rape, prostitution, pornography and pedophilia are all still forbidden (Lev. 18:6-26, 19:29; Deut. 22:25; Matt. 5:27-28; Eph. 5:3). Sex, like a fireplace, is a wonderful benefit to enjoy in its proper setting, but if the flames get outside the hearth, they will burn your house down.

There's an intriguing account of sexual harassment in Genesis, but it's opposite of the usual way. Instead of a man pushing for sex, it was a woman. Potiphar's sensual wife held all the cards in this scenario. (While men have taken most of the hits in the media lately, reports abound of male and female leaders alike who abuse their positions and seduce their subordinates.) After Potiphar promoted Joseph from a slave to the steward of his household, his wife "began to look at

him lustfully. 'Come and sleep with me,' she demanded" (Gen. 39:7, NLT). Genesis 39:10 indicates that this was not a one-time occasion, but she tried to entice Joseph daily. When he repeatedly rebuffed her advances, she falsely accused him of rape and had him arrested. Later, God exonerated and exalted him from the prison to the palace due to his integrity. Joseph never compromised even in the face of torrid temptation; a lesson for us all.

The key word the Bible uses regarding the treatment of women is "honor." The Hebrew word *Kabad* translated "honor" means "to be heavy" or "to make weighty," because valuable things tend to be heavy (i.e., gold, silver, precious stones). So, to honor someone is to treat them as valuable, to give weight to their words and cherish them as the true treasure they are. How do you treat a costly crystal vase? You treat it carefully as something precious that has special worth. Moses, Jesus and Paul taught us to "honor our father and mother." Peter instructed husbands to "live considerately with your wives, giving honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they too are also heirs of the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7b, MEV). Paul directed husbands to "love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25). Paul also told Timothy, to treat "elder women as mothers, and the younger as sisters, with complete purity" (1 Tim. 5:2).

In many countries, women are battered, abused, mistreated as inferior and kept in strict submission. They are deprived of education, not allowed to vote, drive a car, work outside the home, or leave their house without permission. If they disobey their husbands, they are punished.

Oppressing women is evil and contrary to Scripture. In the biblical model, God made men and women equal yet unique. When God formed Eve, He didn't use Adam's foot bone which might imply inferiority or a skull bone to suggest superiority. Rather, God used a rib which speaks of equality, close to his side and near his heart, so he would love her and

under his arm, so he'd protect her. The Bible elevates women to an honored status and teaches to treat them with the highest dignity and respect. To physically, emotionally, sexually or verbally abuse a woman is an offense against God in whose image she is made. It's time for another sexual revolution in America—a revolt against a culture of corruption and disrespect toward women matched by a renewed passion for purity in *all* our relationships. {eoa}

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