

We Must Cry Out for Holiness

✖ When I agreed to write about sexual immorality in the body of Christ, I thought pulling the information together would be an easy task. As a pastor, counselor, speaker and public health educator, I often address this topic. But as I began to wrestle with the many perspectives from which I could approach the issue, I almost lost myself in a crippling hodgepodge of psychology, sociology and theology.

Finally, I decided that the best approach was the biblical approach. After all, God's perspective, clearly revealed in His Word, is the only perspective that really matters.

The Bible makes four simple declarations about human sexuality:

1. God created our sexuality, and it is beautiful (see Gen. 1:26-28; 2:24-25).
2. Sex within the marriage covenant is holy and pure (see Heb. 13:4).
3. Sex outside the marriage covenant is sin (see 1 Cor. 6:9).
4. Sexual relations with the same sex is an abomination (see Lev. 18:22).

Many nonbelievers would probably reject these statements as trivial, outdated, homophobic, narrow-minded, judgmental, accusatory and discriminatory. Unfortunately, judging from their lifestyles, many

Christians do too.

I'm not writing to nonbelievers. I'm writing as a Christian to Christians from a Christian perspective.

I wish sexual immorality were a problem outside the church only. But it's not. It's a big problem inside the church, also, among Christians and Christian leaders.

Often when I've taught about sexuality in church meetings, I've been shocked by the concerns that were expressed to me privately. Take my word for it: Every form of sexual addiction, perversion and practice is alive and well among believers, and it stretches from the pulpit to the vestibule of the church and everywhere in between.

The issues, problems and consequences of carnality and sexual immorality are recorded in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

God has given us clear guidelines in His Word. So why are so many believers today involved in sexual sin?

Let me put it bluntly: The reason is that too many of us are refusing to yield totally to the Holy Spirit. We declare with our mouths that we love Jesus; we say we will follow Him wherever He leads us.

But our actions indicate otherwise. Our actions say, "I love you, Jesus, almost as much as I love myself; and I will follow you all the way until I get to the fork in the road where I make

the
choice to satisfy my own carnal desires. I will believe your
Word up to
the point at which it disagrees with the secular perspective
that
explains my behavior. Any variance from that perspective means
Your
Word is outdated and is not for today."

How did we get to this place? How did the body of Christ
reach the state in which sexual sins are not only overlooked
by many
Christian leaders but are being openly committed by the
keepers of the
flame? Blatant immorality, drunkenness, womanizing and
perversion are
running rampant and unchecked in too many assemblies!

Strong words, you say? Yes, these are very strong words.
But strong words are what are needed to rout the "strongman"
of
immorality. The sins of fornication, adultery, homosexuality
and
perversion have become deeply rooted in the church and are
tolerated by
too many of us.

Part of the problem is that we've believed the lie that
church leaders are "faultless." That lie has caused many of us
to close
our eyes to the sexual sins in which some leaders have engaged
while
serving as our spiritual shepherds. Those "private Bible
studies" and
late night "counseling sessions" with single folks, unhappy
spouses and
"sick" members have gone unchallenged and unrebuked by a godly
membership.

Now mistresses have the audacity to sit on the front row
in the church. Homosexual lovers don't hesitate to share the
platform
during praise and worship. Unmarried couples who sleep
together
Saturday night have no qualms about sitting in church together
Sunday
morning.

I am aware that I sound angry. I am angry! I'm tired of
seeing strong young men and women in the church devastated by
the
ravages of AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases and
dysfunctional
lifestyles as a result of sexual immorality. It hurts to see
the hopes
and promises of beautiful teen-agers and young women dashed
when they
discover that they're pregnant and the father has disappeared
or has
announced to the world that the child is not his baby because
the
pregnant female "sleeps around."

Who will comfort the young child who has been fondled by
a priest, a pastor or a trustee of the church in the church?
Who will
help rebuild the shattered emotions of the pastor's wife after
she has
discovered her husband's infidelity with the church secretary
or the
Sunday school teacher, or worse yet, one of the young men in
the choir?
Who will sound the clarion call to sanctification and holiness
in this
age of promiscuity and rank immorality?

Needless to say, we need a revival. The principles of

sanctification and holiness need to be revived at the altar. We must stop petting folks who want to stay in their sins. We must herald the truth of God's Word. We must face sexuality immorality squarely in the face and declare holy war on our carnal nature.

God has given us plain and simple instructions throughout the Bible such as those found in Galatians 5:16: "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (NKJV). We need to study the Bible and let the Word of God speak to us. We must be willing to hear and to repent of the sin that God reveals in our lives through His Word. After all, we serve a loving and gracious God who is waiting and willing to forgive us, sanctify us and restore us.

The strongman of immorality can and must be overcome in our lives and in our churches. There are specific things we can do to ensure his defeat.

1. Flee temptation. If you are struggling to overcome sexual sin, it is your responsibility to flee temptation. Be wise. Avoid situations that would contribute to sexual arousal. For example, if you are dating, don't allow your date to sexually arouse you with kisses, touches or any other kind of stimulation.

If soft music turns you on, put on some hymns or a loud Kirk Franklin album. Play a marching band if you must!

More importantly, associate with those who have the same attitude about sexual purity that you do. I know it can be difficult to track them down, but there are saved brothers and sisters out there somewhere. Entreat the Holy Spirit to help you find them.

2. Ask for help. If you need special help, seek out a Christian therapist or physician who is trained in handling the behavioral problems and addictions that have a stranglehold on your life. All healing comes from the Lord, but not everyone is able to get free from behavioral problems without assistance.

3. Take the risks seriously. If you know what is right but are choosing to live in willful disobedience, I ask: Is it worth the risk? As a Christian participating in a sexually immoral lifestyle, you risk death from incurable, sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS, hepatitis and more. You risk losing your mate and your family because of your unfaithfulness. You risk losing your self-esteem and the respect of your peers and neighbors. You risk devastating your business or profession, especially if you are in ministry. Worst of all, you risk your fellowship with the Lord.

4. Make a commitment. It doesn't matter whether the behavior you're involved in is "trendy" or not. As a Christian, you are a "slave of righteousness," and your call is to crucify the lusts

of the flesh. It is possible to live holy if you desire to do so.

Commit yourself to staying before the Lord on a daily basis and

avoiding anything that would contribute to your taste for immoral

pleasures or gratification outside of marriage.

5. Confront unfaithfulness. If you are a Christian wife and your husband has been unfaithful, ask yourself: Is your spouse

truly repentant, and will he remain faithful after repentance? Is the

unfaithfulness a continuous practice, or was it just one breach of

fidelity? Is your spouse a professing Christian, or does he just go to

church on Sunday? Is he a Spirit-filled man whom Satan tripped up but

who is now truly repentant?

Only you can answer these questions. Forgiveness is possible—and biblical—but the Bible also says that you are not obligated to remain with an unfaithful mate. If you choose to stay with

him, you must realize that your husband's unfaithfulness could well

mean your early demise from undetected disease. Given the severity of

the sexual diseases among us, I strongly suggest a period of sexual

abstinence and then the use of protection at all times, even after lab

reports have determined that your mate is disease-free.

Even if your husband is a pastor or church leader, do not hesitate to confront him head-on about his infidelity and report it to

the other church authorities. Women must stop shielding and hiding such behavior. Many are suffering physical abuse and threats from these “spiritual leaders” because they are too afraid or too embarrassed to expose them.

Stop being a punching bag for these unregenerate heathen! The Word tells us that a man is worse than an infidel if he neglects his family (see 1 Tim. 5:8). Seek legal help to get the support you need to maintain your family and yourself. There are laws on the books that address adultery!

6. Don't accept excuses. If you are a member of a congregation and discover that one of your leaders is being sexually immoral, you have a responsibility to bring it to the attention of the church leadership. This action must not be based on hearsay or gossip. But if you know without a doubt, then it is your duty as a Christian to pull the covers off this festering boil that affects the whole body of Christ.

There are no excuses. We do things because we want to do them, and your pastor or leader is no exception. Besides, how can you sit under the leadership of a hypocrite who thumbs his nose at God's state of holy matrimony?

Yes, it takes courage to uncover sin, but it must be

done—even if you are rejected by the leadership. Even if you're called a liar! Just pick up your marbles and move to another ministry after you have sought God's face. You don't want to find that you've run from the frying pan into the fire.

7. Confess your sin. If you are a Christian leader, pastor or minister involved in sexual immorality, you need to confess your sin and seek serious counseling—both psychological and spiritual. I personally believe you need to be relieved of your position during this process. You cannot continue on as though nothing has happened. There needs to be public repentance and restoration before you mount the pulpit again or accept any kind of leadership position.

8. Stand up for holiness. To all believers and ministers of the gospel, I say: Wake up! We need to combine forces to lead a strong, faith-based, biblical attack on the scourge of sexual immorality that has become epidemic in our congregations.

It is time to stand up for Jesus. It is time to rebuild the walls of holiness and sexual purity in the church so that we are no longer a reproach to the world. In the words of Nehemiah 2:8: "Let us rise up and build!"

Judy Ann Fisher is the founder and pastor of the Full

Gospel Church of the Lord's Missions International in Washington, D.C.

She is also the international executive director of its missions

service organization, Mercy Outreach Ministry International. A gifted

businesswoman, she is owner of several companies and has traveled

extensively as a motivator, lecturer and presenter of her Human

Sexuality series.