

# The Way of a Man with a Maid – Family Series 2025

## #1 - Not Like the Gentiles – 1 Thess 4:1-8

**Introduction** – Proverbs 30:18-19 states that the way of a man with a maid is too wonderful, too mysterious to understand fully. Ever since Adam set his eyes on the first bride, poems and songs of the deepest desires have been written (Gen 2:23). It's springtime, love is in the air, and so for husbands and wives, for prospective suitors, for young men and women, for parents to instruct their children, for boys and girls, for Christians of all ages, this series is to address what it means that "*marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled*" (Heb 13:4a). In our passage this morning, Paul addresses the battle that must be fought to both understand and practice sexual fidelity with holiness to please God.

**About More and More** (vv1-2) – The pursuit of holiness is an ongoing journey, a hard journey, for all our days here before we go to be with the Lord. Paul knows this and therefore he urges and exhorts in the Lord Jesus for these Christians to put into practice all the things he has taught them. There isn't a command from the Lord that we do not need to have repeated to us, with exhortation, for our flesh is tricky and always is seeking to push limits, cross lines and satisfy its lusts.

**"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from sexual immorality"** (v3) – Lots of things are included in our sanctification, but this takes front and center for the Thessalonians; it must have been the topic of Paul's addresses to them before and is the thing in which they are to abound more and more. Holy living is about what we do with our minds and our bodies, especially in relation to one another. The word *porneia* has a broad definition including any kind of sexual uncleanness. A practical definition would be that *porneia*/fornication is any kind of unmarried fooling around, and every reasonable person knows what fooling around includes. The problem is that our flesh tends to make us very unreasonable people.

**Possess One's Own Vessel** (vv4-5) – This phrase is ambiguous and could refer either to one's own body or the body of his or her spouse. Fortunately, whichever way we take it, it amounts to the same thing. We are to know how to handle our bodies in holiness and honor. Christians must learn how to possess their bodies in a holy way and not in a pagan way, which means there are stark differences which we must understand. To give in to the "*passion of lust*" is to be like those who do not know God. And to those who will not acknowledge God, nor His authority and sovereignty over sexual intimacy, God gives them over to uncleanness, the lust of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies (Rom 1:24). And look at the unbelieving world around you. We are not to be like them.

**Do Not Defraud One Another** (v6) – There is a way to take advantage of others with fornication and there are ways to defraud and shame others. Consensual sexual immorality still steals, shames, and defrauds the other person. There are sober warnings here: the Lord is the avenger of all such. The Lord gives persons and societies over to His judgment when they fail to submit to Him in these ways.

**Fornication is a Despising Rejection of God** (vv7-8) – To reject God's pattern defrauds others, but worse, it despises God. It rejects God who has given us His Holy Spirit. He mentions the Holy Spirit because you are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:18-20). The Holy Spirit is with you when you fornicate, when you lust like the pagans, when you look at porn or watch filthy movies. It is to fall into the works of the flesh and the judgment therein.

**Walk to Please God** – To sum up these verses then, we are commanded to walk in such a way as to please God by abstaining from sexual morality. But let us be careful not to confuse being holy with being fastidious or squeamish about sexual intimacy. While the world around us touts all forms of fornication as natural, to stand against this is in fact to uphold true sex and sexuality. Notice, they are the ones denying that God created man in His image, male and female He created them (Gen 1:27). Gender and marriage (and therefore all things sexual) must be understood in light of God's ways and not in the ways of the world. We are not the result of time and chance working on matter. Therefore, male and female, sexuality and family – none of these are evolutionary works. This is why the marriage bed is a glorious place (Heb 13:4) and why we need to learn to make love like a Christian and not like the pagans. Marital lovemaking pleases God. Marital lovemaking glorifies God, but all acts of fornication, by definition, cannot and will not glorify God.

**The Marriage Bed and Sexual Purity** (Heb 13:4) – Some might now be thinking, "Great. Now there is going to have to be some talking and explaining to my kids," to which I might respond, "and it's about time." The world is already catechizing them.

There is nothing shameful about talking about sex. There is something shameful about talking about it the way our unbelieving culture does. But that is because what they are talking about is not really sex, but sexual fraud. Let's put it another way: fornication and adultery are not lovemaking any more than a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill is money. "*Sexual union is such an intimate aspect of our lives that it has to be protected if we are to be protected. It must have a tall covenantal fence all the way around it...When a sexual union is sealed with a lawful covenantal oath, it is called marriage*" – Douglas Wilson.

Before the Fall, lovemaking in marriage was designed as the means of procreation and close, relational pleasure (Gen 1:26-31, 2:18-25). After the Fall, God also established marital lovemaking as the primary protection against sexual temptation (1 Cor 7:2-5).

**The Foundation of the Pleasure of God** – The gospel is proclaimed through biblical sexuality (Eph 5:32). But this also means that the gospel is the center of where we find what we need to fight for sexual purity. We cannot battle temptations with the flesh; we must battle with faith and by the Spirit (Gal 3:1-4). In Christ, we have been justified and we are objectively pleasing to God. There is no condemnation (Rom 8:1). And that perfect justification sets us free to pursue our sanctification with gusto. What saves us from such grimy sins is what sanctifies us from the same battles with the flesh: the blood of Jesus (1 John 1:8-10). It is by means of the Holy Spirit, by means of God's grace, and only of those means received by faith in Jesus Christ that we will be able to "*possess (our) own vessel in sanctification and honor.*" And so, all of this must be received, understood, embraced, and practiced as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, not morose in our moralism, but joyful in holiness.

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