

Lessons from Desert Wandering – Human Sexuality

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Human sexuality has become a big issue in our culture of today. One of the reasons is because of social media and public schools now teach this topic very early to students. We now have to deal with the gender issue. I had taken a class online a few weeks ago at the Luther Seminary at Gettysburg. It was by Zoom and some of the adult pastors have gender identifiers beside their name like he, her, she and pronouns. I did not join into this trap since I believe God created only male and female. Sin has expanded the gender issue. Plus, this has spilled into sexual relationships between humans as well. There is a big argument over how to handle this issue in some churches and denominations. However, the issue can be solved very easily. What is God's will in human sexuality? This issue may make us feel uncomfortable; however God did deal with this issue in the Old Testament and the New Testament. As we continue with lessons learned from desert wandering, we'll see God laid the groundwork for what He wants from us and Jesus would follow the same path as His Father.

So, let's turn to Leviticus 18: 1 – 6 where we read this from Moses, **"18** Then the LORD said to Moses, ²"Give the following instructions to the people of Israel. I am the LORD your God. ³So do not act like the people in Egypt, where you used to live, or like the people of Canaan, where I am taking you. You must not imitate their way of life. ⁴You must obey all my regulations and be careful to obey my decrees, for I am the LORD your God. ⁵If you obey my decrees and my regulations, you will find life through them. I am the LORD.

⁶"You must never have sexual relations with a close relative, for I am the LORD.

Now, let's turn to Leviticus 18: 22 – 30, **"22** "Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin.

²³ "A man must not defile himself by having sex with an animal. And a woman must not offer herself to a male animal to have intercourse with it. This is a perverse act.

²⁴ "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for the people I am driving out before you have defiled themselves in all these ways. ²⁵ Because the entire land has become defiled, I am punishing the people who live there. I will cause the land to vomit them out. ²⁶ You must obey all my decrees and regulations. You must not commit any of these detestable sins. This applies both to native-born Israelites and to the foreigners living among you.

²⁷ "All these detestable activities are practiced by the people of the land where I am taking you, and this is how the land has become defiled. ²⁸ So do not defile the land and give it a reason to vomit you out, as it will vomit out the people who live there now. ²⁹ Whoever commits any of these detestable sins will be cut off from the community of Israel. ³⁰ So obey my instructions, and do not defile yourselves by committing any of these detestable practices that were committed by the people who lived in the land before you. I am the LORD your God." (NLT – Biblegateway)

In Leviticus, God spends a lot of time giving directions to Israel in how they are to live. In verses 1 – 6, God lays the foundation by saying four times after He gives direction about obeying the law that He is the Lord your God. Israel was not to take this lightly. God told Israel that they were not to follow the practices of Egypt from where they came from and from Canaan where they were to take over. The Lord now tells them in verse 4 they are NOW to follow His decrees for I am the Lord your God. In other words, there was to be no middle ground. Israel was not to follow the sinful practices of the nations around them period. This was the command of God. Israel was a chosen people of God. They were actually the Church of their day being an example to the nations around them for God. They couldn't be an example to the nations around them if they follow the other nations' sinful customs. Then, in verse 5, God tells Israel to "keep" His decrees and laws for those who obey them will live by them. God didn't say that these laws can change because after one or two generations down the road the new generation can decide to change them. Israel was to follow these decrees and laws until God would decide otherwise because "I am the Lord your God". They have no right to change these laws and decrees on their own. Let's fast forward to the days we live in. Many in the Church of today have taken action against the decrees and laws of God and have changed them to fit the culture of the day. They have no authority to do so. Only God can change His own laws and decrees. We can't change the laws and decrees in the New Testament to fit our own selfish needs because God is the only one who can change His own laws. God is not

going to change any law that allows or ok's sin because God is all Righteous. Some will say today and I have heard Lutheran professors say this that many of the New Testament decrees and laws do not fit in our culture today so we don't have to follow them. They have no right and authority to override what the Lord tells us how He what us to live today. These professors should be fired and never allowed to teach such false teachings. We have not been given authority from God to change His laws and decrees in the New Testament or the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament. Let's look at one example of a law our society likes to change today.

In verse 6 of Leviticus, we read that God didn't want Israel to approach any close relative to have sexual relations, "for I am the Lord". Then, the Lord goes into detail about not having sexual relations with different family members. When we come to verse 22, we read that the Lord did not want Israel to practice homosexuality for it is a detestable sin. In Hebrew, the term for "detestable or abomination" means something "repulsive". It can also mean intense distaste. Last Tuesday was a warm day. I had my window partly down while going down Green Valley Rd in Seven Valleys and the pig farm nearby must of had put down some fresh pig waste. The repulsive smell filled the vehicle to the point where I started to tear up. I had to roll up my window, but the damage was already down. The smell stayed in the vehicle for awhile. Sexual sin was repulsive to God in the Old Testament. Then the Lord states that man can't have sexual relations with an animal. In chapter 19: 19, God didn't even want Israel to breed cattle with other kinds of animals. Sexual sin was repulsive to God. It was detestable to Him. Any sin is detestable to God.

We shouldn't be surprised by this. In Leviticus 19: 1-2, we read, "The Lord also said to Moses, 'Say this to the entire community of Israel: You must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.' (NLT)" God of the Old Testament was "holy". We can also say God to pure in the purest form. God is the inventor of purity. If God allowed sin or ok'd sin in the Old Testament then He couldn't be pure / holy. Being pure means free of any contamination (Oxford). How could a holy God be ok with sin – He can't and we shouldn't be surprised by this.

Plus, the Lord tells Israel that since He is holy / free of any contamination, they are to be holy as well. If we go back to Leviticus 18: 24, God gives us the reason

Israel was to be holy: “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the people I am expelling from the Promise Land have defiled themselves. As a result, the entire land has become defiled. That is why I am punishing the people who live there, and the land will soon vomit them out. You must strictly obey all of my laws and regulations, and you must not do any of these detestable things. This applies both to you who are Israelites by birth and to the foreigners living among you. (NLT)” Israel was the church of their day and they set the example of what it means to live with their God. The bad part was Israel failed to follow God many times and they followed the sinful ways of the nations around them. Sexual sin was part of that.

Now, some may say that we don't have to follow the Old Testament laws God had set for Israel. The problem with that thought is God is still holy and still finds sin repulsive to Him. We have become the Church Israel was during their day in the Old Testament. We are to set the example to the culture not the other way around. We are still to be a holy people. Peter, the leader of the Church after Jesus' resurrection states this in 1 Peter 1: 13 – 20, “So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the special blessings that will come to you at the return of Jesus Christ. Obey God because you are his children. Don't slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be his children – is holy. For he himself has said, ‘You must be holy because I am holy (Peter is quoting Leviticus).’ And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites when he judges. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as foreigners here on earth. For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold and silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him for this purpose long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you. (NLT)” So we see Jesus is the sinless and spotless Lamb of God. Jesus is holy and pure just like His Father is. So, Peter uses Leviticus 19 to describe how we are to live today. God hasn't changed and this command from Leviticus that Peter now uses tells us we are to follow the same path as Israel did in the Old Testament. We are the example to the culture, not the culture being an example

to us. We are to detest sexual sin. There is only man and female. We do not ok homosexuality because it is not holy. We do not ok any other sin because it is not holy. We are to be holy because our Lord is holy. Our culture embraces sin and many in the Church today are doing so as well. The Church in many areas is following the footsteps as Israel did. Shame on us because we should know better. Why is this happening?

If we go back to Leviticus 18 again, we see in verses 1 – 6, “I am the Lord your God or I am Lord four times. In fact, these phrases are used over 30 times between Exodus and Deuteronomy. God was beating into their heads that God made the laws and decrees that would help to make their life go much easier. It wasn’t Moses who made the laws, but God was who made the laws. Only God can change the laws that He made, not mankind. This is what has happened today. We have church people / leaders who are changing the laws of God to fit their needs and desires. How dare anyone to think they can change the laws of God. Who do they think they are? Plus, they are saying the sin that is detestable to God is no longer detestable. This is shameful and unholy because it takes away the holiness of God. If Martin Luther was here today, he would say they are not followers of Jesus (my paraphrase) and he would be right. God’s Word has given us the guidelines for human sexuality and that has not changed because God is all holy. The Lord is still “I am the Lord your God” today. We can’t change the rules. We were not given the authority. Maybe we need to say that every day – “I am the Lord your God”. The church must follow Him and this means we will go against the tide of our current culture. We can’t waver under the pressure, but must grow stronger and stronger in faith so we don’t become like Israel that went with the tide – back and forth. We are to be a holy people. The Lord knows what is best for us. Let’s ask the Lord to help make us holy. His Spirit is more than capable to fill our minds and hearts with pure holiness. Do you want to be holy??

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996