

- **\*READ Romans 13:11-14\*** Exactly four weeks ago, millions and millions of people across the world were gathering around TV screens watching the final game of the 2019/2020 National Football League season. The 49ers were driving to close the first half with a field goal, but the drive was stalled out by a questionable offensive pass interference call. The penalty ended any hopes of a score, so the half came to a close, and the teams went into their locker rooms to make halftime adjustments. It was at this point that what can only be described as an exotic dancing exhibition broke out being led by Jennifer Lopez and Shakira.
- Anyone who knew anything about the background of these two performers surely would've been able to accurately guess what was about to take place, and those guessers were shown to be true as the two scantily-clad women and their co-performers began to dance provocatively in the plain view of millions of people. Again, this should have been done to the surprise of just about no one.
- But there was one aspect of this performance that did catch my attention and surprise me as I did my best to keep my eyes looking down at my delicious plate of food...and that was the presence of young girls on the stage. The main performer out of this group of young girls was J-Lo's 11 year old daughter, Emme. This was not only surprising to me, but I was also quite saddened to see such young children participating in such a sexually charged performance. And I wasn't the only person who was uncomfortable with youths either participating or being exposed to such a thing.
- There were numerous parents, and particularly those of young men and boys, were upset that their children were being exposed to grown women flaunting their bodies as they were during the most watched sporting event of the year. The easy solution would be for people to simply look away or change the channel, but we must admit that looking away is becoming more and more difficult because this type of sexually charged behavior is more prevalent today than in times past.
- This isn't to say that sexual temptations and sins haven't been present in the past, we can look to the Scriptures and see them as clearly being present during the times of the Bible's writing, but I do believe that there has been a change in how these types of things are generally accepted in our society. Years ago, such a performance would have garnered nearly unanimously negative reviews because there was much more of a sense of decency and modesty in our society. That simply isn't the case anymore and it doesn't take very long looking around to see that as the case.
- And this is what leads to our considerations for tonight that are focusing greatly on the need for all disciples but especially our young people to make sure that they are guarding their hearts against the indecency and immodesty of the society and culture that we live in today. Again, sexual temptations and sins have always been present, but they have not always been up in our faces or as easy to participate in as they are today. In decades past, to go to a gentleman's club where women were behaving in inappropriate ways meant that you would have to go to the sketchy parts of town and you didn't want people to see you going in or coming out, and if you were one of those women then you certainly didn't want people to know that was your job. But now there are unions for such women fighting for their rights as workers in that particular type of job, and the stigma around going to those places just isn't what it used to be.
- And I haven't even said anything yet concerning the rampant rise of the pornography industry and all of the troubles that it has caused in our society. I understand that this is a tough subject to discuss, but good brethren this is a subject that must be discussed because our youth are under attack. I am young enough to have a decent idea about what our young people face from the evil one on this subject, and I know that things have only become more difficult for them as time goes by. Let's do our best this evening to focus our minds on this difficult subject as we seek to strengthen our hearts against one of the evil one's most potent weapons against God's desire for our holiness, righteousness, and purity.

## I. The Dangers Facing Our Youth

### A. The danger of the world warping a proper understanding of sexuality.

1. One of the purposes for God giving us His Word in a manner in which we can all access it and learn from it is for us to be able to establish what it is that God wills for us in any particular area of our lives. The Bible is the tool through which God teaches us, rebukes us, corrects us, and trains us up in righteousness. **(II Timothy 3:16,17)** Everything we need in order to be fully equipped to please God as His people can be found within these pages.
2. However, the vast majority of our lives are spent not with our heads buried in the book. Life is lived out there in the real world, and the evil one is doing everything he can to make sure that whatever is taught in that book is counteracted by what is being seen, done, and taught in the world around us. The Bible teaches us everything that we need to know about sexuality, but the evil one wants to use our sexually-charged culture to counteract the good teachings given to us through the Scripture.
3. The committed, monogamous, marital sexual union is laughed at by the world around us. Our young people are being told that waiting until marriage to give your body to another person is old fashion and out of style. When our young people stand up for God's design and say they are waiting till marriage...they are laughed at and ridiculed, and no wonder many of them begin to think that just maybe the Bible is out of date and style. All they see all around them are people participating in sexual acts that fall no where near the divine standard of Scripture, and all it takes is for their understanding to begin to be warped...next thing we know...their understanding of sexuality has been completely perverted by the world. This is a real and true danger that each of us must recognize as being legitimate! Guard your hearts!

### B. The danger of faith in God being abandoned or damaged through sexual sins.

1. We also need to realize that these dangers come with real consequences if our young people give into the temptations. Of course, all temptations and sins are dangerous and can lead us down dark roads, but we need to recognize that sexual sins are especially dangerous because they come with severe spiritual implications...the most important being that we are failing to recognize our bodies now belong to the Lord and ought to be used only to glorify Him.
2. Paul writes a great deal on this subject in **I Corinthians 6:12-20**. The context begins with Paul addressing what seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of the Corinthians concerning the use of their bodies. The Corinthians seem to have been thinking that their bodies and the use of them were not all that important (*"Everything is permissible for me."*), but Paul states that it does matter how our bodies are used. *"However, the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. God raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Don't you know that your bodies are a part of Christ's body? So should I take a part of Christ's body and make it part of a prostitute? Absolutely not! Don't you know that anyone joined to a prostitute is one body with her? For Scripture says, **The two will become one flesh. But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.**" (I Corinthians 6:13-17)*
3. Paul goes on to emphasize that sexual immorality is especially egregious before God because it is a sin against one's own body that is supposed to be preserved as the *"temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body."* **(I Corinthians 6:19,20)** When we fail to preserve the sexual purity of our bodies, we are disrespecting God who redeemed us from our previous sins to live in holiness and righteousness before Him. The vessel He has blessed us with in which the Holy Spirit dwells has been disrespected. Such danger awaits our young people in this sexually charged society that seeks to teach them that anything and everything goes and is acceptable. Young people, you must guard your hearts!

### C. The danger of relationships being damaged through poor decision making.

1. It isn't just that God is dishonored and hurt when we give ourselves to another person outside of the marriage union, but our future relationships can be harmed by our failure to use our bodies appropriately in our youth. Remember that sexual sins harm our bodies, and Paul even says that if we join our bodies to that of a prostitute or even anyone who has no right to us... we are going against God's design for the use of our bodies.
2. In the moment we are engaged in immorality, we might not, and probably don't, feel poorly about what we're doing, but we are only setting ourselves up for intense feelings of guilt and regret when it is time to be able to fulfill those desires righteously in the marriage relationship. The Hebrew writer states in **Hebrews 13:4**, "*Marriage is to be honored by all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, because God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.*" In this union, we can live and enjoy the blessings of marriage guilt free because it has been ordained and blessed by God, but our failure to hold to that standard now in our youth will only allow the possibility of guilt and regret to hang upon our hearts later on in life. And it also gives openings for many other damaging things such as disease and psychological issues. These dangers are real, and we must be on guard against the constant attacks of the evil one through our sexually-charged culture. Once more...guard your hearts!

## II. How The Hearts Of Our Youth Can Be Guarded

### A. Be proactive in teaching early, honestly, & often on the subject of sexuality.

1. One of my goals with this study is to encourage every parent to create good, wholesome, and beneficial dialogue within our homes as we are doing everything we can to train our children up in the Lord. (**Ephesians 6:4**) One of the things that we must talk about is this very subject, and yet...I wonder if it is happening as it ought to. Let's be honest...this is a really uncomfortable subject to address! It is uncomfortable (yet necessary) to talk about this subject in this setting, and it doesn't get much easier when it is done even just between parents and their children. This is still a difficult conversation to have no matter the circumstances.
2. I can still remember "the talk" that my mom had with my sister and I. It was in the car going somewhere, so we were trapped and there was no getting out of it! Yet, it was a talk that needed to happen. However, I would suggest to you that this type of talk doesn't need to be a one time thing... we need to continually be open and honest with our children about this subject because I promise you, speaking from experience, there wasn't a thing my mom told me that day that I didn't already know. I had already heard it in school and in the world. We need to be ready to accurately teach our children God's view of sexuality so that their understanding isn't warped by the world they live in.
3. This can be helped by having this as something that we talk about more than once. Is it awkward? Yes, it is awkward! But just like with many other awkward conversations, the more we discuss it honestly and accurately...the more comfortable our children will become in talking to us. This will allow them to be willing to come to us when they have questions and not seek the knowledge of friends at school or people out in the world.
4. When I talk about speaking with them honestly and accurately, that means explaining to them this subject from a Biblical viewpoint. It means explaining that God made man and woman from the very beginning to leave father and mother, to be joined in marriage, and to be joined as one flesh. (**Genesis 2:22-25 & Matthew 19:1-6 & I Corinthians 7:1-5**) Our children need to know that the sexual relationship between a husband and wife is not bad! It is God glorifying, and it the way that God has given us to righteously fulfill our needs and desires that are natural. Dads and moms, we must teach our children the godly perspective of these things (**Ephesians 6:4**) or else they'll learn it somewhere else. This teaching of our children on this subject shouldn't be different from any other. (**Deuteronomy 6:4-9**) We need to take every opportunity to guard their hearts!

**B. Be aware of what our youth are seeing and hearing on a daily basis.**

1. Which leads us to the next point concerning our need to make sure that we are keeping up with what our children are seeing and hearing on a daily basis when it comes to this subject. We need to be constantly communicated with our kids and keeping up with what they are listening to and watching. We need to monitor to make sure that they are not filling their impressionable hearts with garbage that will only lead them down a pathway of immorality. This is even true for the youngest among us and the evil one is behind it all!
2. What might fall in this category? Sadly, too much. Too much of the entertainment industry whether it be movies, TV shows, or songs contain all sorts of inappropriate content (Even shows for our youngest kids!) that will only cause for our young people to be negatively influenced. Jesus said in **Matthew 15:18-20**, *"But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander. These are the things that defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile a person."* In context, Peter is worried about eating food with unwashed hands, but Jesus says that is nothing. What really matters is making sure that what comes out of us is good and wholesome and not all of these wicked things. What helps us to make sure that what is coming out of us is good? Make sure that what we are consuming is good!
3. This is seen in what Paul writes in **Philippians 4:8,9**, *"Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."* As parents, we need to be purposeful in making sure that our children are watching or listening to things that will benefit them. If what we are allowing them to listen to doesn't fit into these categories (like provocative Super Bowl halftime shows), then we are only allowing them to be set up for lives that are devoid of God's peace through the presence of temptation which leads to sin and its consequences. We must seek to guard the hearts of our children and young people by steering them away from things that will only lead to their corruption of their hearts. We must do our part as parents to guard their hearts!

**C. Establish reasonable and appropriate boundaries to preserve their purity.**

1. I know that ideally we would love for all of our young people to be in full control of their emotions, hormones, and bodies because they have grown up in this setting...but we would be naive if we think it is smart to simply allow our children to have absolute freedom in life without any sort of boundaries. Just think about yourself as a teenager and tell me if that would have been a good thing for you to have. I know for myself that would have been absolutely disastrous. This means that we need to be wise in establishing reasonable and appropriate boundaries for our own children for the sake of preserving their purity.
2. The greatest threat to the purity of our children is actually present in this room, and it is the smart device. We've already mentioned that there are many dangers in what our children can watch and listen to and so much of that is done through their smartphones. I know the young folks aren't going to like this, but we would be wise to make sure that we have set parameters on our children's phones to make sure they are not viewing things that are inappropriate and destructive to their faiths and purity. The sad reality is that the average age of first exposure of young people to pornography is anywhere from 8 to 11 years old, and some of that isn't even their fault! Predators are out to harm our children and we must protect them. We might wonder why we are in the mess that we are in! But we can take preventative steps. There are a number of apps and other resources that can be downloaded or subscribed to that can help make sure that our young people are not exposed to the temptations and dangers can come through the smartphones. We must guard their hearts in this way!

3. Finally, this also means that we need to be talking to our young people as they mature about how they ought to carry themselves when they begin to date. We need to establish wise and responsible boundaries that will help them to preserve their purity. We were all young people with raging hormones, and our children are going to experience the same. Therefore, we need to teach them how to behave in a godly manner and help hold them accountable to God's standard so that they can enter into marriage full of happiness and without regrets. We must guard the hearts of our young people so they can grow into strong faithful young adults who will be able to glorify God in everything that they do. We would do well to take to heart the words of **Song of Solomon 2:7 & 3:5**, *"Do not stir up or awaken love until the appropriate time."*

Let me again say that I realize that this type of study is difficult to have because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter, but I do hope that we all realize that this is such an important discussion because we live in a world where our children and young people are under attack and being continually assaulted by the wicked influences of the evil one. May God be with our young people and strengthen them to remain pure in a world that seeks everything but such.

Let me also state that any mistakes that have been made up to this point by anyone young or old or in between doesn't mean that you are damaged goods or beyond God's grace. No matter your sins, transgressions, or mistakes even if sexual in nature... God's grace can overcome and make you whole. May we all strive to guard our own hearts and the hearts of those whom we love dearly, and may we embrace and remember the words of the Apostle Paul in His letter to the Romans. May these words encourage us to live before Him in righteousness and holiness *"The night is nearly over, and the day is near, so let us discard the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light."* **(Romans 13:14)**