

Stay Away From Perverted Practices **Leviticus 18 and 20** **May 23,2010**

One Sunday a preacher told how, while sitting in his garden, he had watched a caterpillar climb a painted stick that was for decoration. After reaching the top, the caterpillar reared itself, feeling this way and that for a juicy twig to feed on, or some way to further progress. Finding nothing, it slowly returned to the ground, crawled along till it reached another painted stick, and did the same thing all over again. The preacher said: "There are many painted sticks in the world--those of pleasure, wealth, and fame. All these call man and say, 'Climb me to find the desire of your heart, fulfill the purpose of your existence, taste the fruit of success, and find satisfaction, but they are only painted sticks.' "

Solomon tried to find the purpose of his life in the world's "painted sticks." He gave his heart to seek wisdom, but learned that it was "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 1:15).

He then turned to the pleasures of the world for meaning in life. He built great houses, and gardens, and pools. He had servants and maidens; in fact, he had all that a man could desire. Solomon's comment on pleasure as a true source of happiness, however, was, "All was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Eccl. 2:11).

After trying all that the world could offer, Solomon's final decision was, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13).

I. Avoid Worldly Practices. Lev. 18:1-5

Have you consciously decided to expose your growing child to 18,000 murders? That is what the average young person will view on television by the time he or she graduates from high school. Your child will have spent approximately 12,000 hours in formal classroom learning but will have watched approximately 22,000 hours of television.

Those figures explain the results of a recent World Almanac poll of 2,000 eighth-grade boys in the United States. The poll asked them which people they wanted to be like when they grew up. Their leading role models were, in order, Burt Reynolds, Richard Pryor, Alan Alda, Steve Martin, Robert Redford, and the late John Belushi. Traditional names such as Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, and other noted figures in American history were conspicuously absent from the published list. In fact, no one was named who was not an entertainer or a sports figure.

Whom do your children want to emulate and admire? Will they someday say, "Aw, come on," if you suggest that they should want to be like Jesus?

A man said to D. L. Moody, "Now that I am converted, have I got to give up the world?" Mr. Moody answered, "No, you do not have to give up the world; if you have a good ringing testimony for the Son of God, the world will give you up pretty quick; they will not want you around."

"Wisdom" may best describe our present scientific and cultural plateau, yet spiritually we are foolish indeed. Many men, seen as wise in the eyes of the world, are fools in the eyes of our God.

The atheist who audaciously affirms, "I know there is no God," is elevated upon the pedestal of intellectualism and wisdom by the world of pseudo-science, yet God calls him a fool (Ps. 14:1).

Humanists, who deny the existence of sin, and contend that one's conduct should best be determined by the circumstances in which he finds himself, are applauded and lauded as the wise men of our age. God, in no uncertain terms, has said, "Fools make a mock at sin" (Prov. 14:9).

The world cries out, "Do what makes you feel good; do your own thing!" God has decreed, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool" (Prov. 28:26).

The rich farmer in the twelfth chapter of Luke, who found comfort in his accumulation of worldly goods, would be seen by many among us today as a wise man indeed. God called him a fool (Luke 12:20).

How does God see you, my friend? Our nation seems to be floating with the tide of moral and spiritual corruption. Are you drifting with the tide, or are you willing to stem the tide? I would rather be a fool in the eyes of a foolish world, than a fool in the eyes of my all-wise Creator.

The coach said to the quarterback, "Give the ball to George." But instead he gave it to John, and there was no gain.

Demanded the coach, "Why didn't you give the ball to George?"

"Sir," replied the quarterback, "George said he did not want the ball."

There was a player on our Lord's side named Demas. Like George, he did not want to carry the ball. He valued comfort above character, ease above effort, gold above God, self-indulgence above self-control.

Of him Paul wrote, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved the present world."

Are you willing to carry the ball for the Lord?

II. Avoid Immorality. Lev. 18:20-26

The term "sexual immorality" in the New Testament comes from the Greek "porneia," which we get our English word pornography today.

The gap between the entertainment industry and the public seems to be widening. It may have started in 1939 when Clark Gable uttered his infamous expletive at the end of *Gone with the Wind*. Public outcry was expressed by people leaving theaters to show their disapproval. More recently, Newsweek reported a survey that compared the moral and religious attitudes of 104 top television writers and executives with the American public. The following data emerged: 49 percent of Hollywood believe adultery is wrong, as opposed to 85 percent of the public. Forty-five percent of Hollywood has no religious affiliation as opposed to 4 percent of the public. Twenty percent of Hollywood believes homosexual acts are wrong, as opposed to 76 percent of the public. Ninety-seven percent of Hollywood believe in a woman's right to an abortion, as opposed to 59 percent of the public. The entertainment industry is shaping and influencing the lives of many people. We must temper that influence with biblical morals and values. Newsweek, July 20, 1992, p. 55

Goldie Hawn said her children decided it would be a mistake for her to marry longtime live-in partner, Kurt Russell. "They don't want us to get married because we're so happy. I've been married; they've been through that already." Hawn's way of life has become the readily-accepted norm of not just Hollywood, but America as well. But it seems many are not comfortable with such lax values. In the March 27, 1992 issue of USA Weekend, movie critic Michael Medved dominated the cover story. Medved succinctly said, "Hollywood no longer reflects--or even respects--the values of most American families." What followed was the largest caller response in the magazine's history. The phone lines were jammed with Americans agreeing with Mr. Medved. More than 54,000 callers noted their discontent with Hollywood. Twenty-one thousand felt Medved was wrong. Likewise, a Houston Post phone-in survey received over 12,000 calls (4,000 more calls than any previous survey) when readers were asked to agree or disagree with Vice President Quayle's criticism of Murphy Brown. Eighty-five percent of the callers agreed with Mr. Quayle and expressed concern over the TV character's moral message about unwed mothers. Thankfully, there are positive models in Tinseltown. The marriage of John Tesh to Connie Sellecca made the cover of People magazine's April 20, 1992 edition. The feature article noted that both Tesh and Sellecca were "born-again Christians." It reported that the couple maintained premarital abstinence throughout their year-long courtship because of their religious convictions and Sellecca's desire "to be a good role model to my ten-year old son, Gib." Tesh was quoted as saying, "Even if Connie and I could not have sex for the rest of our lives, we would not leave this relationship." The entertainment industry may not be what we want, but positive change will only come through Christians voicing their concerns while seeking to touch the lives of movie makers with the redemptive message of Jesus Christ. People, April 20, 1992, p. 108-114; Houston Post, May 22, 1992, p. A-11; Houston Chronicle, May 16, 1992, p. 2A; USA Weekend, April 24, 1992, p. 24

Here are some of the results of a 1999 survey on the subject of sex given to 1,015 teens. The study was commissioned by *Seventeen Magazine* and the Kaiser Family Foundation:

Percentage of 15-19 year olds who have had sexual intercourse: 40% Percentage of those surveyed who believed that most teens have sex: 75%

III. Avoid Sorcery. Lev. 20:6-8

Sorcery is a term loosely encompassing a number of activities that are forbidden in the Bible. It is defined as the use of evil supernatural power over people. It is closely connected to witchcraft and the casting of spells. Today the whole subject of sorcery has gained wide popularity as reflected particularly by the Harry Potter books and movies. We have also been gently initiated into sorcery by the TV, starting long ago with such innocent and funny programs like "I Dream of Jeannie," then moving deeper into programs such as "Bewitched," and finally on to the really heavy stuff like "The Exorcist."

It seems that despite its strong biblical prohibitions, we Christians hardly have a clue as to sorcery's evil nature and its damaging effects upon humankind.

WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF SORCERY?

We see that sorcery can begin in seemingly innocent ways but due to the captivating and holding power of evil, it always leads people into deeper involvement. Some of our children's games can even become the doorway into the occult. I am speaking of games like the Ouija Board and Dungeons and Dragons. These are very popular among the youth. In the *Encyclopedia of New Age Beliefs* by John Ankerberg and John Weldon, they mention a *Consumer Reports* survey of 17,000 young people between the ages of 10-14. Out of 83 games listed as enjoyed and played most often, Monopoly was number one but the Ouija Board was number two. Ankerberg and Weldon quote psychic and spiritist, Harold Sherman, president of ESP Research Association in Arkansas. He says, "The majority who have become involved with possessive and other entities come by this experience through the Ouija Board." Of Dungeons and Dragons, Ankerberg and Weldon state that magic is prevalent along with demons, necromancy, astral projection and spells.

Magic potions and drugs are age-old companions of sorcery and witchcraft. As our world drifts more and more into sorcery, we should not be surprised at the increased use of hallucinogenic drugs. Those experimenting with drugs today probably do not realize that they are likely also experimenting with sorcery. For years, the close connection of drugs and sorcery has been noticed in the New Testament Greek word for "witchcraft." It is the word "*pharmakia*" (Gal. 5:20), a word from which we get our "pharmacy."

Over the last several generations, due to modernist tendencies in Christianity, we have discounted such things as sorcery, witchcraft and demons. We did this in spite of the fact that the Bible takes them all quite seriously. Today in our society the occult is taken for granted even by the unbelievers. The TV and movies are saturated with it. It is about time that we Christians once again acknowledged this dangerous reality.

HOW WILL GOD DEAL WITH SORCERERS?

God regards sorcery as something very serious. He regards it as so dangerous that in the Old Testament he commands the death sentence for sorcerers. We see this in Leviticus 20:27: "*A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.*" In Exodus 22:18, we also read these stern words from God: "*Do not allow a sorceress to live.*"

King Saul was God's anointed king. He wanted to serve God, but somehow he always managed to fail. In obedience to God's word he banned sorcerers from the land. However, in the moment of trial as he faced his last battle, he visited the witch at Endor (1 Sam. 28:7). The purpose for the visit concerned necromancy, that is consulting with the dead, also a forbidden practice. The scripture tells us that it was partly for this reason that Saul was killed the next day (1 Chron. 10:13-14).

The New Testament does not speak so much about sorcery because it assumes that God's people have read and heeded the Old Testament. It is obvious from the gospels that a large part of Jesus' ministry was spent in undoing the work of sorcery by casting out evil spirits. Jesus' disciples were also commissioned to carry on this vital task. On one occasion, as a result of Paul's ministry, former sorcerers brought forth their magic books and burned them (Acts 19:19). The cost of the books was listed at 50,000 *drachmas*. A *drachma* was about a day's wage, so this sacrifice amounted to a sizeable fortune. On another occasion in Acts 8:9-25, Peter deals directly with Simon the Sorcerer, who apparently wanted to mix God's truth with his sorcery. Peter said to him: "*You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right before God*" (Acts 8:20). It is interesting that the early church writers credit this Simon as a source for much false teaching in Christianity's early years.

The horrible price of continuing to practice sorcery is illustrated for us in Revelation 22:14-15. Jesus says, "*Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.*" Obviously those who choose to practice magic arts or sorcery will be permanently excluded from the kingdom of God.

The good news is that there is still time to repent of this sin. The Bible says in Psalm 97:10: "*Let those who love the LORD hate evil...*" God hates sorcery. As we have seen, it is detestable to him. As God's dear children we must love what he loves and hate what he hates. Yet, we know from the Bible that while God hates sin, he loves the sinner. While we also must hate the sin of sorcery in all its forms, we must remember to love the sorcerers and never stop praying for their deliverance.

- Jim Gerrish

(n) **sorcery**, black magic, black art, necromancy (the belief in magical spells that harness occult forces or evil spirits to produce unnatural effects in the world) **Magic**, sometimes known as **sorcery**, is the practice of consciousness manipulation and/or autosuggestion to achieve a desired result, usually by techniques described in various conceptual systems. The practice is often influenced by ideas of religion, mysticism, occultism, science, and psychology.

Maleficium is a Latin term meaning "wrongdoing" or "mischief" and is used to describe malevolent, dangerous, or harmful magic, "evildoing" or "malevolent sorcery". In general, the term applies to any magical act intended to cause harm or death to people or property.

Witchcraft, in various historical, anthropological, religious and mythological contexts, is the use of supernatural or magical powers. Witchcraft can refer to the use of such powers in order to inflict harm or damage upon members of a community or their property.