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FOLLOW-UP FIVE: YOUR NEW LIFE IN RELATIONSHIPS

CLASSIC FOLLOW-UP SERIES

This is how the Basic Follow-up Series looked way back in the day—back when computers apparently looked like this:



And yet it's still effective and still the material of choice for some staff and students. After going through the lesson, treat your disciple to a nickel root beer and a rousing game of pong.



Your New Life in Relationships 5

*Remember — As you grow in your relationship with God, He will **reveal** His character and will; the Holy Spirit **enables us** to live a life which reflects **both**.*

A father will tell his son not to touch a hot stove top. He does so **not** because he wants to squelch his son's curiosity or take away his fun. Rather, he gives the prohibition because he knows that the stove will burn his child. His motivation is to protect his son from harm as well as provide safety.

Just as this is true with earthly fathers, so it is true in our relationship with our Heavenly Father. God's guidelines for relationships are an expression of His love.

1 WHY WAIT FOR SEX? BECAUSE GOD SAYS TO WAIT

Read I Thessalonians 4:1-8.

The apostle Paul was complimenting the Thessalonians on their walk with God. Because their desire was to walk with and please God, Paul was encouraging them "to excel still more." His emphasis was in the area of purity in relationships and, specifically, the sexual area.

By whose authority is this commandment given?

What is God's will?

Key Points:

- A.** God desires our comprehensive sanctification. In other words, it is His will that we develop His character in every area of our lives. Purity and holiness are part of God's character.

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality..." 1 Thessalonians 4:3

- B.** God desires Christians not to defraud each other in relationships. We defraud someone when we cause them to step outside the boundaries God has established.

"...See that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter..."
1 Thessalonians 4:6

On the surface, the Bible appears to be full of negative commandments which seem imposing and dreary. However, we need to remember that God has only one motivation — **love**. When we understand that He always seeks what is best for us, these commandments become positive.

2 GOD'S COMMANDS: BOTH TO PROTECT YOU AND TO PROVIDE FOR YOU

Behind every negative command are two positive principles. One is to protect us, the other is to provide for us. In other words, when God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," He is **not** being a cosmic killjoy, as we will see.

God's command to wait for sex until marriage is given in order to:

Protect: Your mind from the images of past relationships.

Protect: You from mistrust and suspicion in relationships.

Protect: You from confusing the intensity of sex with the intimacy of love.

Protect: You from the fear and consequences of sexually transmitted diseases.

Protect: Your Christian testimony.

Protect: Your fellowship with God.

Provide: Freedom to enjoy your future spouse without detracting mental images.

Provide: A foundation of trust for your current and future relationships.

Provide: You with intimacy: true knowledge of the other person outside of the physical.

Provide: You peace of mind as you enter a marriage commitment.

Provide: Integrity in your Christian witness that ministers to others.

Provide: The abundant life.

Why do you think God wants to protect and provide for you? Look at the following verses and answer in your own words: Romans 8:38-39; Psalms 103:17-18; Deuteronomy 10:12.

God protects us by giving us boundaries and limitations to our activities. They are an expression of His love and wisdom and they keep us from doing ourselves harm. Not only do His commands keep us safe from harm but they are also targeted to provide for us in specific ways.

3 A CLEAN HEART FOR A NEW START

One of the greatest mistakes people can make is to assume that since they have failed to keep God's command regarding sex, God wants nothing to do with them. This is simply not true. God is well aware of our sinful tendencies — that is why Jesus Christ came.

For King David, what began with a stare, led not only to adultery and an unwanted pregnancy, but also to a murder. David really blew it. But consider what happened next.

Read Psalms 51:1-17.

David admitted his sin and asked God for forgiveness. Like David, we can receive God's complete forgiveness and make a clean start.

Here are several important steps to take.

A. Confess the sin.

Specifically name your sin before God and ask His forgiveness. *1 John 1:9*

B. Forgive yourself.

If you are not willing to forgive yourself, you are saying two things to God:

(1) Christ's death was not enough for your sins; and (2) you are a higher judge of what can be forgiven than God is. God's grace is extended to you out of His heart of love. When you do not forgive yourself, you throw God's grace right back into His face. If God's grace can't cover your sin, it can't cover any sin. *Romans 8:1*

C. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Allow God's Spirit to fill you with His power to say no to future temptation. *Ephesians 5:18*

D. Show fruits of repentance.

Repentance means turning around, changing one's mind. Matthew 3:8 says, "bear fruits worthy of repentance." This might mean breaking off a relationship or perhaps making a decision not to be alone together. It might be something else. Whatever it is, your actions should show you have changed. The individual who professes to be a Christian but who continues to practice sin should realize that he or she may not be a Christian at all. *John 14:21; 1 John 2:3*

God's complete love and forgiveness enable us to make a clean start and to live a life pleasing to Him.

4 YOUR NEW LIFE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Our new life in relationships begins with a **decision** to live a life pleasing to him.

Read Daniel 1:8.

*"But Daniel **made up his mind** that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself."*

Key word:

Defile: To become impure.

What was Daniel's decision?

What was the result? Read Daniel 1:9-13.

Read Hebrews 13:4.

Starting today, is it your desire not to defile yourself and remain pure until marriage?

Yes Date ___ / ___ / ___

No Date ___ / ___ / ___

The following will help you maintain relationships that please God.

A. Prayer and Bible Study.

Regularly spending time with God will help you understand and live out His priorities for your life. *Psalms 1:1-3; Ephesians 5:8-10; Jeremiah 9:23,24*

B. Spirit-Filled Life.

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live pleasingly to God. *Galatians 5:16*

C. Accountability.

Our accountability to another person helps maintain our accountability to God. *Ecclesiastes 4:9,10; Proverbs 27:17; Ephesians 5:21*

D. Fellowship.

Seek fellowship with godly people who support and strengthen your convictions. *Hebrews 10:24,25; 2 Timothy 2:22*

As you grow in Christ, you will see how God's commandments are given with your best interest in mind. Because this is true, **choosing to wait** is the most rewarding decision we can make.

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