



The truth about sexual lust; Part 4.

“SEXUAL IMMORALITY”



Earlier editions of this series have exposed the faulty foundations of *Every Man's Battle*. In the previous newsletter I showed you how *Every Man's Battle* is founded upon law rather than grace, and assumes that God cannot be happy with a man until that man masters his flesh and refuses even to look at anything even remotely sexually attractive. To Arterburn and Stoeker, a man who would master his flesh must remove “every hint of sexual immorality” (page 9) from his life, which includes the God-given desire to behold feminine beauty.

We know what “sexual immorality” means to Stephen and Fred. The big question is: *What does it mean to God?*

In this edition of the ZWTF, I will show you how God's idea of sexual immorality differs vastly from Stephen Arterburn's and Fred Stoeker's. You may question my use of the word “vastly,” as if it is hyperbole and I could not possibly mean it. I'll admit it may be the wrong word. The right word may be, “stupendously,” or perhaps, “unspeakably.” The authors not only make their standards for what they call “sexual immorality” higher than God's, they assume their standards *to be* God's. I could only make this charge if I can prove it from Scripture—and I can. If a book (*Every Man's Battle*) purporting to teach you how to curb your flesh and be a good Christian and a good man starts out on the wrong foot, then the entire project eventually tumbles into a ditch from which everyone must crawl and start from scratch. Isn't it better to lay a proper foundation? This is why I have written, *The Lie of Every Man's Battle*. I do not want anyone wasting months or even years of self-imposed piety, only to end up ditched and desperate, no better than one was before one started—in fact, worse.

Here is how Fred Stoeker starts chapter 1 on *Every Man's Battle*:

“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity” (Ephesians 5:3). If there’s a single Bible verse that captures God’s standard for sexual purity, this is it. And it compels this question: In relation to God’s standard, is there even a hint of sexual impurity in your life?



At the outset, Fred forwards Ephesians 5:3 as the “single Bible verse” that “captures God’s standard for sexual purity.” This is it, then. This is the big gun, and Fred has un-holstered it in the very first sentence of *Every Man’s Battle*. It is this verse that inspires and informs the remainder of the book, and is set forth as the standard by which all men must live. It is by this standard that all men must now ask themselves, *Is there a hint of sexual immorality or impurity in my life?*

Everything hinges on what God considers “sexual immorality” to be.

“Sexual immorality” sounds broad to me. I am surprised at God’s non-specificity. If this is what God actually said, I’m not complaining. I’m just saying it would have been helpful for the Deity to have enumerated His sexual prohibitions. Seeing as how this is His standard, wouldn’t a laundry list have benefited us? After all, Fred makes the following all-important self-discovery on page 19, spending the balance of the book applying it to everyone:

I finally made the connection between my sexual immorality and my distance from God.

Fred purports to know God’s thoughts, writing on page 42:

We’ve said earlier that God’s standard is that we avoid every hint of sexual immorality in our lives.

Do you want to be holy and honorable? According to Fred Stoeker (page 48), there is only one way:

Therefore it is holy and honorable to completely avoid sexual immorality—to repent of it, to flee from it, and to put it to death in our lives.

Why is it so important to understand God’s thoughts on sexual immorality? Because if you either purposely or inadvertently entice someone to do something sexually immoral, then—well, I’ll just let Fred tell you himself:

If you entice others to sexual immorality (maybe in the backseat or back room), Jesus Himself has something against you! (pg. 48)

What if you know someone who is doing sexually immoral things? We should not be in close association with another Christian who persists in sexual immorality.

Therefore, according to Fred Stoeker, here are your marching orders:

Take His command seriously—Flee sexual immorality! (pg. 48)

Do you now see how vitally important it is to grasp just what this “sexual immorality” of Ephesians 5:3 is?

Again, too bad God wasn’t more specific. Because, my goodness, if a man’s standing before God—if a man’s ability to look God in the eye and pray effectively—depends on abstaining from “every hint” of “sexual immorality,” one supposes it would have behooved God to have itemized precisely what constitutes this. What could be more important to know? Must we depend on mere humans to define this important term?

The thing is, God *has* itemized these things. God *is* specific.

The very first sentence of *Every Man’s Battle*, where Fred quotes and comments upon Ephesians 5:3, is fine except for one slight problem. In Ephesians 5:3, God never said, “sexual immorality.” In the Greek, there is only a single word here, and it is the Greek word *porneia*.

***Porneia* does not mean “porn”**

What does *porneia* mean to God? That’s the all-important question. We can know for sure. This is the Greek



word from which we have derived our English, “porn” and “pornography,” but in not a single Scriptural context does this word mean “pornography” as common English usage has come to define it. To us, “pornography” is a catch-all term meaning, “sexually explicit pictures, writing, or other material whose primary purpose is to cause sexual arousal.” If we apply this broad definition to the Scriptural contexts where *porneia* appears, it fails on contact every time. Here is but one example: At the famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said (Matthew 5:32):

Everyone dismissing his wife outside of a case of *porneia* is making her commit adultery.

Let’s test our popular understanding of pornography against this context:

Everyone dismissing his wife outside of a case of her looking at sexually explicit pictures or reading sexually explicit writing, is making her commit adultery.

Hmm.

Jesus is setting forth the one case in which a man can

dismiss his wife. There is one case, and one only. Many Christians quote this verse. Every Christian knows what *porneia* means in this context (what it means in *this* context, by the way, is what it means in every *other* context, without exception.) According to Jesus in Matthew 5:32, what is the one sexual crime for which a man can dismiss his wife? Obviously, the answer is not reading a romance novel or gazing upon calendars depicting hard-muscled construction workers, both of which can be construed as “pornographic” by our broad definition.

The answer is: adultery.

Specifically: prostitution. Here is the verse from the *Concordant Literal New Testament* (CLNT), which I consider the most accurate translation available:

Everyone dismissing his wife outside of a case of prostitution (*porneia*) is making her commit adultery.

Here is the verse from the *New International Version* (NIV):

Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness (*porneia*), causes her to commit adultery.

Here is the *King James Version*:

Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication (*porneia*), causeth her to commit adultery.

“Prostitution.” “Marital unfaithfulness.” “Fornication.”

Which is the proper term? We need to know. At least we’re getting close. We have eliminated the thought that *porneia* means pornography as modern culture has defined it, that is, racy pictures or writing.

Again, why is it so important to nail down the meaning of this word? Because the entire premise of *Every Man’s Battle*, stated on page one of chapter one, is that God hates “*porneia*” and expects everyone to stop it; just knock it off. The premier thrust of *Every Man’s Battle* is that those committing “sexual immorality” deceive themselves into thinking they can still look God in the eye. If there is something that, according to Arterburn and Stoeker, should make us feel that guilty and ashamed, doesn’t it behoove us to discover precisely what that thing is? According to the authors of *Every Man’s Battle*, this “sexual immorality” is God’s standard, and we are supposed to “kill every hint of” that immorality (pg. 59).

I don’t care what Stoeker and Arterburn think *porneia* is. I want to know what God *says* it is. I want to be careful, too, because, as Clyde Pilkington warns in *Due Benevolence; A Survey of Biblical Sexuality*:

Many Bible words have lost their true meaning through years of relentless religious tradition. Fornication (*porneia*) is clearly such a word. It has been well molded to suit Christendom's moralist agenda.

Arterburn and Stoker—not God—are the ones using the phrase, “sexual immorality” (they quote from the NIV). God never said it. Not once in the whole of Scripture does the phrase “sexual immorality” appear. How can I be so bold? How do I know this for sure? Because God did not write His revelation in English. The NIV is a translation, and is therefore the work of humans. God wrote the Old Testament in Hebrew and Aramaic, and He wrote the New Testament in Greek.

Not all translations are accurate. How can every translation be accurate when there are hundreds of translations, and none of them are alike? This is potentially frustrating. How can we know which translation is correct? Do we have to rely on scholars and translators? Is there a way we can find out for ourselves? Did God give the common man a tool?

Thankfully, He did. It's called a concordance. A concordance is an objective reference tool listing every single appearance of every single word in the divine vocabulary. With the help of a concordance, anyone can look up any specific word in its divine contexts and determine for him or herself the meaning of that word. It is divine contexts that determine the meaning of a word. The context tells us what the word meant to God when He wrote it. In other words, the company a word keeps gives away its meaning.

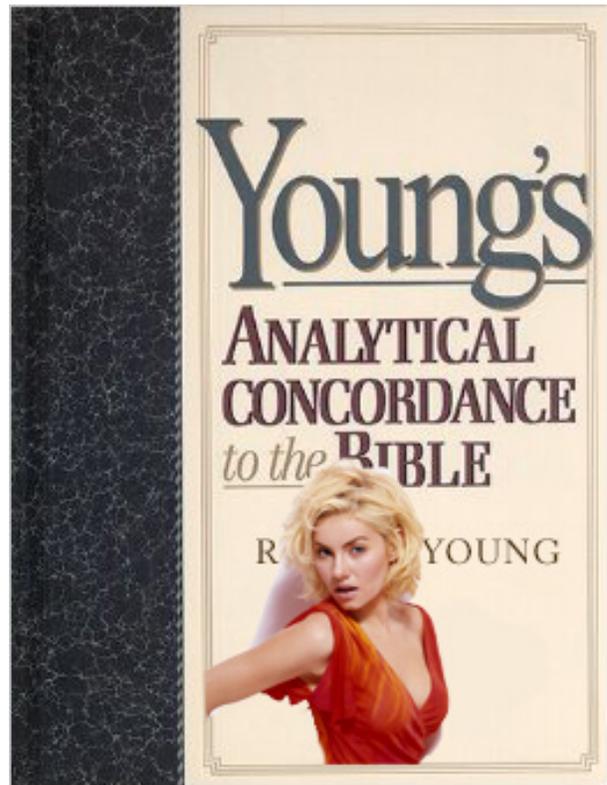
While a word may have various usages, each word has only a single meaning. This is not the case in English (“I swung my bat at the bat after packing my plane for the plane”), which is why God did not reveal Himself in English. Hebrew and Greek are precision languages. Each word has its own meaning, and no two words mean the same thing. (I'm not trying to be mean.)

Scriptural context tells us all we need to know. By examining Scriptural context, anyone with an iota of intelligence can determine the meaning of a Scriptural word. We will know we have the right English word for the Greek word when that English word fits every Greek context.

The word God said was, “*porneia*.” Our big question, again, is: “What did this word mean to God?” As William Barclay famously said in his *Daily Celebration*:

If we fail to study the meaning of the words of Scripture, then we will be in very serious danger of making Scripture mean what we want it to mean, and not what God wants it to mean.

Here is an example of the power of context, and the usefulness of it. Your children will never know what “yucky” means unless you say it while smelling dog poop. When you smell dog poop and say “yucky,” your children will know “yucky” means a bad smell. If you want to ruin your kids for life, say “yucky” while eating ice-cream. Or say, “yummy,” while smelling dog poop. For the rest of their sorry lives, your kids will confuse “yummy” and “yucky,” and will probably become social outcasts by the time they reach third grade.



You say, “But Martin. What if there were a country where ‘yucky’ *does* mean ‘delicious?’” The same rule applies. All one has to do is study that country's context. Read their writings; listen to their conversations. If they say, “I just kissed the winner of the beauty pageant, and it was yucky,” then you will know.

Such is the power of context.

Scripture defines its own words by where the words appear, in context.

Just by looking at Matthew 5:32, therefore, we know *porneia* means either “prostitution,” “marital unfaithfulness,” or “fornication.”

Can we further narrow the meaning? We can.

There are three different forms of the word *porneia* in

the New Testament. *Porneia* is the noun, that is, the thing itself. This noun is used in Matthew 5:32 when Jesus gives the one case in which a man can divorce his wife. Used in a sentence, we could say, “Mrs. Tamale got caught in a case of *porneia*.”

That’s the noun.

There is another form of the word, *porneuo*, which is the verb form; it means to do the thing itself. Paul uses this form twice in 1 Corinthians, chapter 10. The CLNT translates this, “commit prostitution.” Paul speaks of the Israelites exiting Egypt, and warns the Corinthians to avoid their sin. Here is the context: Nor yet may we be committing prostitution (*porneuo*), according as some of them commit prostitution (*porneuo*), and fall in one day twenty-three thousand (1 Corinthians 10:8).

There is one other form of *porneia* that will solve everything. Before unsheathing it, let’s examine the above 1 Corinthians context. By doing so, we will discover what Paul meant by “*porneuo*” and by extension, what God meant. We need only investigate the Old Testament sin Paul referenced to discover what exactly made God kill those twenty-three thousand people. Was it looking at bra ads? Ogling female joggers? Paging through a *Playboy*? Watching R-rated movies?

We shall see.

Paul refers to Numbers, chapter 25. We must look here. You mustn’t settle for religion’s vague ideas and dim theories. We don’t care what Arterburn and Stoeker think *porneia* is, because they may very well have an agenda. We don’t even care what the NIV thinks, or the CLNT for that matter. Everyone may have an agenda. God will show us Himself what it means by the divine context. God defines His own words by inspired context. When we fix the definition according God’s truth, we will then be able to return to our original passage (Ephesians 5:3) and be founded on facts rather than fog. We will discover a strong prohibition against a specific thing, rather than a loosey-goosey, uninspired, catch-all phrase (“sexual immorality”) used by agenda-ridden moralists to clobber people.

In 1 Corinthians 10:8, Paul says, in essence, “Don’t commit *porneuo* like those people back in the Old Testament committed it, which resulted in the death of 23,000 of them.” What exactly did those people do that caused 23,000 of them to die? Now you’re asking the right question.

Here is Numbers 25:1-9 from the *King James Version*:

1And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab.

2And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

3And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

4And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

5And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

6And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

7And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand;

8And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel.

9And those that died in the plague were twenty and four thousand.



First of all, the discrepancy between Paul’s 23,000 and the 24,000 here in Numbers, chapter 25, is that Paul chose not to include the “heads of the people” of verse 4, who were hung (this amounted to 1,000 people), but referenced only the 23,000 common people beneath these heads, slain with



the sword (verse 5). In any case, this is harsh judgment.

In the margin of his Companion Bible, E. W. Bullinger elaborates upon the specific crime committed by Israel in Shittim. Concerning “Baal-peor,” (“Slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal-peor,”—verse 5), Bullinger writes:

Baal=Lord; Peor was the mountain on which he was worshipped (25:18 Josh. 22:17). Baal was a Moabite idol, and those who called (verse 2) the Israelites were **the prostitutes necessary** for his worship by others. Cp. Hos. 9:10; Jer. 11:13. *Peor* also means ‘opening,’ and may have relation to this “worship.”

Here is the horrible truth: Nearly every nation besides Israel worshipped false gods. The chosen way to approach these deities was via sexual intercourse. Why? For the same reason attractive women sell everything today from car insurance to coffee filters. The purveyors of the false gods therefore installed their prostitutes in the deity’s respective temples, or on the “high places,” that is, atop mountains.

By engaging with these prostitutes (“engaging” is my euphemism for having sexual intercourse with them), a man identified himself with the worship of that particular deity. These were the infamous “cult-prostitutes,” the bane of Israel’s existence and objects of God’s wrath.

The Shittim Israelites slain by hanging and sword, therefore, were not merely glancing at Midianite pamphlets promoting Baal-peor, however attractive those pamphlets may have been. Neither were they watching R-rated videos titled, “A Beginner’s Introduction to Baal-peor.” Rather, Israel’s leaders and princes were inserting their penises inside the vaginas of the cult prostitutes dedicated to the service of the rival deity. By doing so, the Israelites officially joined, in body and in soul, the detestable Baal-peor.

The very first mention of “fornication” in 2 Chronicles 21:11, confirms our findings:

Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to *commit fornication*, and compelled Judah thereto.

This horrible enticement and sexual sin was not the exclusive property of Old Testament Israel. Paul constantly confronted this sexual scourge in Corinth, which explains his insistence that the Corinthians avoid prostitution.

Tom Gruber writes in, *What the Bible Really says about Sex*:

To corroborate, the Greek historian and geographer Strabo (64 BC - AD 24) writes: "In ancient Corinth, having sex with a temple prostitute was an act of idolatry. Sex was an act of worship that bonded a man to a pagan goddess. In pagan cultures, fornication and idolatry went hand in hand. Having sex with a cult prostitute was a way of worshipping one's favorite god or goddess.

Corinth was famous for prostitution. The Temple of Venus was the most magnificent building in the city. The temple employed a thousand prostitutes financed with public funds. Many early converts to Christianity continued their old practices, which included going to the temple and engaging in orgies dedicated to the worship of Venus. They saw nothing wrong with this. Paul, however, warned them to "flee fornication (*porneia*)." Many have taken Paul's warning out of context. The words "flee fornication" have been widely misappropriated, battering potential transgressors like a ministerial billy-club. Meanwhile, Christendom seems oblivious to what fornication meant in biblical times." (Tom Gruber, *What the Bible Really Says About sex*, 2001, Trafford Publishing, pp. 22, 44-47.)

In His *History of Athens*, Bulwar writes concerning the temple of Venus in Corinth:

There were more than a thousand harlots, the slaves of the temple, who, in honor of the goddess, prostituted themselves to all comers for hire, and through these the city was crowded, and became wealthy. (Bulwar's *History of Athens*, Book 8, p. 151.)

The crime for which 24,000 Israelites died, then, was putting their penises inside the vaginas of prostitutes. And not just any prostitutes, but prostitutes whose sole purpose was to join a man with their god via sexual intercourse.

If it had not been this serious, and this blatant, and this obviously wrong, would God have ordered the slaying of 23,000 people, and the hanging of the 1,000 men (the leaders, the princes) responsible for the wholesale sin?

Do you know what this hanging involved? I loathe sharing the specifics of this hanging, but you need to know. In his Companion Bible on page 218, Bullinger describes the phrase "hang them up" (God's precise instruction, KJV), the penalty due these lawless Israelites:

"**hang them up:** i.e. impaled or nailed to a stake, as in crucifixion."

God ordered these sinning Israelites—that is, the leaders and the princes of Israel who had literally implanted themselves into the cult-prostitutes—to either be lowered upright onto a sharpened stake through their rectums, or to be nailed onto those stakes and left to die.

I'm not sure which would be worse. All I know is this:

Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker have no right to turn *porneia* into some one-size-fits-all condemnation to describe what millions upon millions of average, healthy, God-fearing males do every day beneath the smiling gaze of He-Who-Created-Women-Beautiful-In-The-First-Place.

God killed people in the most horrific manner possible for *porneia*. To God, and to Paul—who tells the modern saints in 1 Corinthians 10:8 not to "commit *porneia*" as the Israelites of Numbers, chapter 25 did, and who says in Ephesians 5:3, "But among you there must not be even a hint of *porneia* ..."—*porneia* is an easily-identifiable, specific, sin. Specifically, it entails a man putting his penis into an illegal vagina. The specific sin of *porneia*, or prostitution, has to do with penises and vaginas. And not only with penises and vaginas, but penises going into vaginas. And not only penises going into vaginas, but penises going into illegal vaginas occurring in the case of adultery, or, worse, in the worship of false gods.

Therefore, how dare Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker turn *porneia* into a laundry list of personal religious prohibitions *they* struggle against? (Sorry, gen-



tlemen, but most men have no qualms looking at bra and panty ads—that is, until they read your book.) How dare they take normal male interest in things feminine (not all men consider their prayer lives threatened when appreciating a pair of fine legs in a miniskirt—that is, until they read your book) and confuse it with cult-prostitution, whereby God ordered 1,000 men to be either nailed to posts or lowered onto sharpened stakes? How dare these

two men so casually pervert the holy word *porneia* (it is holy in that God purified it in a furnace seven times before using—Psalm 12:6—knowing *exactly* what He meant and what He wanted to say) and to define it in the most careless manner possible to accord with their own personal whims (not every man considers beauty evil—until they read your book) rather than in accord with the precise meaning, as defined for us by Scriptural context, easily verified in a readily-available research tool, namely a concordance.

How dare they take “prostitution” and so casually accept the inconsistent NIV rendering of “sexual immorality.” Does this satisfy a self-righteous craving for religious perfection? Whatever the reason, thousands of normal men (they *were* normal, that is, before reading *Every Man’s Battle*) are seduced into the same sexual bondage (yes, forbidding oneself to look at beautiful women is just as much sexual bondage as that which the pornography addict experiences) ensnaring the authors. How *dare* they take this terrible, specific sin (males putting their penises into illegal vaginas) and illegally generalize it in order to engage men in a battle God never meant them to fight?

God wants us men to be “sexually pure,” these authors say (pg. 48). God wants us to “aim for perfection,” they say (pg. 49). “God’s standard,” they tell us, “is that we avoid every hint of sexual immorality (*porneia*) from our lives” (pg. 42).

Well, gee. That doesn’t seem so hard any more.

God is much more rational and sympathetic to basic human needs than authors Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker.

By ignoring God’s definition of “sexual immorality,” Arterburn and Stoeker rake everyone else through their personal religious coals, making “sexual immorality” whatever they want it to be. The result is that millions of well-meaning men believe everything Arterburn and Stoeker say, ignorantly adopting cruel, unusual and ungodly sexual constraints. —**MZ** (*To be continued.*)

