



## Why Chastity?

Ephesians 5:1-14

Week 10 | Mar 11, 2018

**Summary:** The Christian sexual ethic can be summarized in one word: Chastity. That doesn't mean never having sex. It means that as God's holy people we reserve sex for marriage. Dr. Lauren Winner writes, "Chastity is doing sex in the Body of Christ—doing sex in a way that befits the Body of Christ, and that keeps you grounded and bounded in the community. Chastity, in other words, is a fact of gospel life." Only by understanding sex as a unitive, procreative act that reflects the covenant love and creative power of God, will we be able to understand the boundaries and prohibitions surrounding sex.

In Ephesians 5, Paul gives us at least five reasons for remaining chaste and keeping the marriage bed pure (see Heb. 13:4):

1. Because we're God's beloved children, imitating him. (5:1-2)
2. Because we're God's holy people, set apart for him. (5:3-4)
3. Because there's hell to pay for spurning his love. (5:5-7)
4. Because it's Christian, and integrity is being who you are. (5:8-10)
5. Because the conversion of the world may hinge on it. (5:11-14)

### Discussion:

1. Read Ephesians 5:1-14. Which sentence in this passage is easiest for you to agree with and affirm? Which is most difficult?
2. Did the case for sexual purity presented in the sermon make sense to you? Did the logic cohere? Did the argument resonate? Or did you want to push back and offer counter-arguments? How so?
3. Paul says there should not be even a hint of immorality or impurity among us—yet we live in a moral cesspool. How can we manage the demands of the gospel with the realities of the world around us?
4. Do you think we have blind spots with regard to sexual sin? Are there ways we compromise that we rarely even notice or think about? What might some of those blind spots be?
5. Paul says, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them"—and do so in a way that not only arrests the darkness but transforms it into light. How do we do that? What are some practical ways we can obey and live into this instruction?
6. What is one specific conviction or challenge the Holy Spirit is bringing to you in light of this text?

## The Sexual Realities of Ephesus

Ephesus was a major financial center in the Roman Empire. The Temple of Artemis—one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—functioned as the largest church and bank. Being a female deity with a female priesthood, the cult of Artemis combined money and sex to many people's enrichment.

In mythology, Artemis was the daughter of Zeus and the fraternal twin of Apollo. She was the goddess of the hunt, of the hills and wild animals, of virginity, child-birth, and young girls. Given that Apollo was associated with the sun, Artemis was associated with the moon and night. Everything associated with her was ripe for captivating and exploiting the sexual imagination.

In fact, while the Artemis (or Diana) of many cult centers was depicted as a typical strong woman, *Artemis of the Ephesians* was perversely cast as a hyper-sexualized, multi-breasted deity.

It's into this culture that the gospel first arrived. In other words, while Ephesus obviously was not wired like our world, it nevertheless was a challenging place for the Christian faith to take root and grow. But the principalities and powers shuddered at the power of Paul and his gospel! We read about it in Acts 19.



First Paul met some followers of the coming Messiah who had only heard about John the Baptist's preaching. They did not actually know Jesus or have the Holy Spirit's fullness within them. But Paul completed their knowledge of the gospel, and they received the Spirit in power.

From there, Paul entered the Jewish synagogue and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God (19:8). However, when the Jews ran him off, Paul rented a lecture hall and daily proclaimed Christ so that everyone eventually heard about him. During this time, "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them" (19:11-12). When the sons of Sceva tried to duplicate Paul's confrontation with the demonic, they were soundly beaten. This caused Paul and the gospel to be even more highly regarded, and people repented, abandoned their idolatry, and burned 50,000 days' wages worth of occult scrolls! (19:17-20). But then:

"A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: "You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty."

When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was in an uproar...They all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:24-34)

May we, the pure, powerful Bride of Christ in our time create such world-shaking effects. Who is to say that a repentant, gospel-driven people in our day couldn't spark the kind of revival—and persecution—that trailed Paul everywhere he went? *Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you*—and maybe on many others through you!

