



# Let's Get Ready to Rapture

First Thessalonians 4:1-8

## "The Immoral Majority"

Author and apologist Josh McDowell has launched a new website called [Just1ClickAway.org](http://Just1ClickAway.org), designed to show how aggressively online porn can attack a web user and to provide resources to increase awareness and offer help. McDowell says the threat of online porn is dangerous enough to take down whole families in the church, eventually leading to the downfall of the church at large.

"The greatest threat to the cause of Christ is pervasive sexuality and pornography," McDowell said. "Today we have, by and large, lost control of the controls because an intrusive immorality is just one click away from our children. With just one keystroke on a smartphone, iPad, or laptop, a child can open up some of the worst pornography and sexually graphic content you can imagine. There's never been such access in history. "

The solution is complex but it starts with old time religion!

1 Thessalonians 4:1 Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God;

A better translation of "finally" would be "and now." This begins a new section of the letter in which Paul deals with certain issues in the church. One of them was immorality.

He began by "urging" and "exhorting" them to "abound more and more." "Abound" is an important word. It means both *to advance* and *abundantly supplied*. "More and more" qualifies it even further. It was as if Paul was saying, "Go ahead advancing in your Christian life more and more through your abundant spiritual supply."

It doesn't sound limiting; it sounds liberating – and it is. I think it is fundamental that we decide once-and-for-all that the Christian life is a higher, better, life. We too often long for the lower-living we did in the world or that the world offers. God has something better for you.

1 Thessalonians 4:2 for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

They had received something - "commandments." Paul said they were given to them "through the Lord Jesus." In other words, they were directly from Jesus to the believers through the agency of the apostle.

They were not suggestions the believers might want to adopt; they were not a new philosophy or religion. They were authoritative commandments. They were the very Word of God.

What were those commandments? Probably things like, "Get rid of your mistresses," "Quit sleeping with concubines," and "Don't

visit the temple prostitutes." Or, to put it positively, I'm certain there were a lot of commandments about Christian marriage. The word "ought" means *must*. "Walk" means your conduct in all areas of life. The Bible is not suggestive; it is authoritative, and it covers all areas of your life on earth. Follow its commands and you will abound.

They also revered Someone; you see that at the end of verse one where Paul said, "to please God." The One you are living to please died for you on the Cross at Calvary. He rose from the dead for you so you could live forever with Him. He's in Heaven right now working on your mansion. In the mean time, while He's away, He has provided you everything you need for life and godliness. It should be a joy to live in a way that would please Him.

You are surrounded by immorality and subject to your own impulses. You are struggling against society and self. But you're never alone! You have Spirit-checks from the Word that instruct you to abound in abstinence.

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

People are always wondering about God's will for their lives. Your "sanctification" is His will for your life. "Sanctification" means *to be set apart* for God. It is a process that begins when you are saved and continues throughout your earthly life. Everyday you are to be more-and-more set apart for God in your character and in your conduct.

In order to be set apart for God in your character and conduct you must "abstain from sexual immorality." "Abstain" does not mean

to moderate or reduce in frequency or anything like that. It means refrain; it means to desist, to quit.

You are to abstain from, to desist and quit, "sexual immorality." "Immorality" might be translated *fornication* in your Bible. It is the Greek word *pornea* from which we get our English word, pornography.

There are all kinds of hair-splitting definitions of *pornea* and what is meant by sexual immorality. The biblical definition it is based upon the sanctity of marriage.

God created marriage and gave it as a gift to mankind. Marriage is a covenant of companionship between one man and one woman for life; it is monogamous and heterosexual. Within marriage God gave sexual intimacy as a gift. It is for both procreation and pleasure.

Christian marriage has gotten a bad rap. It is generally understood to be prudish and Puritanical. More people should read the Old Testament book, The Song of Solomon – especially the end of chapter four!

A correct understanding of marriage and of the pleasures of intimacy within marriage is foundational. But what about the struggle against both our immoral society and the impulses of sin and self?

In the world you have Spirit-control to influence you to abound in abstinence. I like to say "Spirit-control" rather than self-control because these are things you cannot accomplish apart from God's help.

1 Thessalonians 4:4 that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

"Possess his own vessel" means *gain mastery* over your own physical body. The word "know" means having the knowledge and skill necessary to accomplish a desired goal (MacArthur). By the influence of the indwelling Holy Spirit you have the knowledge and skill to gain mastery over your physical body.

1 Thessalonians 4:5 not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God;

The Jews had a high outward standard of morality based on God's Law. Anyone not a Jew was considered a Gentile.

Gentiles had a very different standard; it was based on selfishness and satisfaction. Their standard was and is "the passion of lust." "Passion" means *overpowering urges*; "lusts" refers to *cravings* and *longings*. Passion is the disease and lusts are the symptoms. The phrase indicates a surrender to your passions so that you become overwhelmed by them. We could put it this way: If you give-in to your lusts you will become a slave to your passions.

The important word in verse five is "not." The Spirit-controlled life is preferable, "not" the life of slavery to your fleshly passions.

1 Thessalonians 4:6 that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified.

Your Bible might use the word "transgress" instead of "take advantage of." The idea here is that you should never step over

the biblical line into immorality because, when you do, your sin always takes advantage of someone else.

"Take advantage" is further explained by the word "defraud." "Defraud" means to selfishly and greedily take something for personal gain and personal pleasure at the expense of someone else. Whenever you seek to satisfy your passion of lust or gain sexual pleasure outside of the sanctity of marriage you defraud someone else. You rob them of their virginity; of their virtue... You destroy families... All for a moment's physical pleasure.

"The Lord is the avenger of all such." Jesus considered this subject of taking advantage of others so seriously that He once warned that it would be better for you to have a one-hundred pound millstone tied around your neck to drown you in the depth of the sea than to stumble someone else.

The Holy Spirit influences you to be mindful of others – especially in the area of sexual immorality. All permissive, promiscuous, pornographic sexual acts and images defraud others. It doesn't matter that the other people seem to be willing participants who have posed or who are prostituting themselves; you still defraud them.

1 Thessalonians 4:7 For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.

If you are a Christian, God first "call[ed]" you to salvation. Radical and remarkable changes took place in your life as you received His Holy Spirit and were born-again. "Uncleanness," or impurity, was overcome by His power and you began to walk in "holiness." You were set-apart by God and for God. Your life had purpose and direction for time and eternity.

Immorality defeats your witness and effectiveness on earth; it will cost you at the Reward Seat of Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 4:8 Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is "given" as God's gift to empower us to obey God's Word. No believer can say he or she couldn't help themselves.

No, what they do is "reject" moral counsel as if it was an opinion rather than receive it for what it is - God's will. They are therefore rejecting God.

I don't know how many professing believers have, over the years, reinterpreted biblical morality to fit with their lusts. They claim to love The Lord. But didn't Jesus say, "If you love Me, keep My commandments?"

It is no love for Jesus that sins blatantly expecting grace in the end.

Back to Josh McDowell's fight. According to McDowell's statistics, more than 1 billion pornographic websites are available on the Internet. The average age of first-time viewers of pornography is 9 years old. The adult pornography industry reports that 20-30 percent of their traffic comes from children. More shockingly, half of all Christian families report that pornography is a problem, and 30 percent of pastors have viewed pornography in the last 30 days.

If you are in those stats... You can Repent! right now.

