

SEX EDUCATION

LEVITICUS 15:1-33

**GOD PROVIDES US WITH MANY OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE TO
EMONSTRATE OUR LOVE FOR HIM AND OUR DEDICATION TO HOLY LIVING.**

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Sex Education

Leviticus 15:1-33

As I decided to preach through Leviticus, I tried to remember sermons that I had heard preached from the book of Leviticus. All I could seem to remember were just certain verses preached or themes like, "Be holy for the LORD your God is holy."

When I got ready to study through this morning's text, and read it, I kind of did a double take, and then understood why the book wasn't often preached through. One commentator stated that he had no intention of ever preaching this passage from the pulpit. However, I also remembered that this was the very first book taught to Jewish children in their study of Torah.

Obviously the book has to do with very specific sexual content, but I don't think the chapter's primary focus is sex. I think the underlying theme of this chapter is all about our love for God. In other words, does God come first in my life, or do I put my desires before God?

I've titled the sermon *Sex Education* because sexuality is another part of our lives that can demonstrate to us who or what takes first place in our lives.

I think when we take a look at our attitudes towards sex as a society; we can quickly come to see that we are self-centered, self-absorbed, and selfish. Our society says that it wants both God and the government out of our bedrooms.

But for the Hebrews, what individuals did in their private bedrooms could end up destroying the whole nation.

But back to our attitudes that are selfish, self-absorbed, and self-centered. You may be surprised to know that this attitude has found its way into churches. We have come to a place in church history where in our day; people no longer look at church as a place in which they can find ways to serve God. People today look at church as consumers shop in stores. People today are interested in what the church can do for them.

Let me give you an example. You remember the church I used to pastor, the one that was so tough. It was so tough that even the deacons in the church had this type of attitude. One brutal winter night, it was snowing, windy, and cold. It was a full-fledged blizzard. I got a call from my head deacon. He said, "Pastor, get over here right away. My wife is really sick and we'd like you to come and pray for her." It sounded serious. I said, "Deacon, I'll be happy to come over, pray, and spend some time with you guys. I'll get dressed right now. Could you do me one favor? My car is in the shop and it won't be ready until tomorrow. Could you please come and pick me up?" With great indignation and anger the deacon responded, "What, are you crazy? You want me to come out in this weather?"

I know this chapter is pretty graphic sexually. But I also know that this is the word of God and He gave it to us for a reason. I also think that if we get too caught up in the sexual descriptions, we may miss what's at stake. Let me put this in textual context. This whole book is dedicated to protecting the Israelites. God was living in the center of their camp. Since God is holy and humans by nature are not, the Hebrews had to remain spiritually clean so they would not die in the presence of a Holy God. That's why through Moses, God warns them, "Be holy for I the LORD your God am holy." God provided different kinds of sacrifices and ceremonies for the Israelites to rectify sin and other things.

We just finished a section in which God designated certain animals as clean: good for eating, and good for sacrificing. Other animals God said they were unclean. Although people could use them, they could not use them for food or sacrifice. Then we went on to describe this situation known as *tsaraat*. It could be a skin disease or it could infect materials such as leather, wood, clay, yarn, and other materials. In a minute, I will review what we talked about the last time concerning mould and mildew growing on stones used to build houses.

Today we will see how sexual discharges can make us unclean. Now keep in mind that being unclean doesn't always mean we have done something immoral. Being ceremonially unclean

means that we can't worship at the Tabernacle, and further that uncleanness can be transmitted to others. If we don't get all caught up in the sexually graphic language, I think the main idea will come through. I think we could state the main idea like this. **GOD PROVIDES US WITH MANY OPPORTUNITIES IN LIFE TO DEMONSTRATE OUR LOVE FOR HIM AND OUR DEDICATION TO HOLY LIVING.**

When someone saw a sore appear on their skin, it was a test of their integrity. It was a test of their love and commitment to God and it was also a test of their care for the other members of the community. And further, we saw that it could come at great personal cost to them. In the case of mildew, it could be a great financial disaster for them to have to tear down their whole house and destroy it. In the case of skin disease, they may be required to live outside the camp and outside the community until the sores healed up.

In this morning's text, again, no one would ever know the person had become unclean unless the person had integrity enough to report himself or herself. What scares me so much about our society is the lack of integrity. When I was young, almost all sexually transmitted diseases could be cleared up with a shot of penicillin. Today however, many sexually transmitted diseases are untreatable. If you get one, you have to live with it until you die. It doesn't matter how sorry you are or how much you cry, you will have that disease until you die. If that's not bad enough, there are sexually transmitted diseases out there that will kill you. If you contract them, you're going to die.

As an Army chaplain, I had to watch women wasting away and dying because their husbands got AIDS while overseas, came home, and gave it to their wives. I'm glad to say that the Army has started to prosecute soldiers who have AIDS and don't tell their sexual partners with attempted murder. I am quite certain that I can predict the downfall of our culture in a relatively short period of time since most people lack the integrity that it takes to maintain a safe and orderly culture. People are so self-focused and self-absorbed; they have no care for the people around them. And I'm sorry to say that churches are not much better. I'm hoping that sermons like this one will get us thinking about the nature of church and our responsibility to be people of integrity.

Before I get into the text let me tell you how it is put together, how I'm going to preach it, and make a comment about women's issues. Let me address them in reverse order. First of all, many people say that the Bible is sexist and makes women second-class citizens and then point to passages like this. That brings me to the structure of this morning's passage.

In technical language it is called a Chiasm. If you were to map it out, it would look like a giant "X". In other words, if we split the passage in half, and wrote down the information in two columns, the top of the left hand column would match the bottom of the right hand column, all the way down and up the columns until finally you would have the bottom left hand column matching the top right hand column. If you will look at your outlines you will see that I have matched the verses for you. Secondly you will see that uncleanness applies equally to men and women. And further, in this case when talking about being unclean, men are addressed first.

I. SEX IS NOT A PRIVATE MATTER (VS 1-2 & 31-33)

Our Personal Sex Lives Can Either Bring Life Or Death To The Entire Community.

Let's get into the text. In verses 1-2 and verses 31-33, we learn that, contrary to our cultural belief, sex is not a private matter. It comes down to this. **OUR PERSONAL SEX LIVES CAN EITHER BRING LIFE OR DEATH TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.**

Let me deal with the obvious first. If a married couple remains faithful to one another, there is almost no chance of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Further, if they have children, those children will grow up to hopefully become future members and leaders of the community.

A. GOD IS EVERYWHERE (1-2)

Verses 1-2 give us the context of these regulations by reminding us that God is everywhere. Again like in the other regulations we discussed before, I have to tell you up front that I have no clue as to the reasoning behind some of these commands. Some I can make a pretty good guess at, some I can simply speculate about, and others I have no clue. Keep in mind that the Hebrews just left Egypt and are now living in the wilderness. On their way to the Promised Land and in the Promised Land, they will encounter many different cultures and many different religions.

Most of the cultures and religions that Israel had encountered and would encounter in the future had sexual rituals and ceremonies that were part of their worship. For example, in the land of Canaan, the people that worshiped Baal were mostly farmers. Before planting season, the farmers went to the temple, had sex with the temple prostitutes, and prayed for a good planting season. Then they planted the seed, went back to the temple, had sex, and worshiped, praying for rain. At harvest time, they returned to the temple had sex, worshiped and asked for a bountiful harvest. After the harvest, they went to the temple, had sex, worshiped and thanked Baal for a good harvest. Can you understand why God told the Israelites not to learn farming from the Canaanites?

Sexual purity, as defined by the God of the Hebrews, would be a way in which they could demonstrate their love for God and their commitment to living holy lives. We will learn that it will take a great deal of discipline, planning, and commitment, to have sex and remain holy. I think that we can begin to see that remaining ceremonially clean and ready to worship on the Sabbath took a great commitment.

As we study through today's passage, I would invite all of us to ask how we personally test and demonstrate our love, commitment, and dedication to God and to living lives of holiness.

Again, let me point out that the entire responsibility lies on the individual. The priest is not contacted here for a decision. The individual knows what has happened. It is up to each individual to take the proper action.

B. GOD IS EVEN IN THE BEDROOM (32-33)

Now look at verses 32-33. Contrary to our society's desire, we come to learn that God is even in the bedroom. God has specific requirements for every time a man ejaculates semen, every time a woman touches semen in any way, any time a woman passes vaginal blood or other fluids, and any time a man drips fluids from his penis as a result of venereal diseases.

C. WE HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE COMMUNITY DISASTER (31)

The big test of integrity is this. No one will know except for the persons affected. That is, no one else except God. Verse 31 reminds us that we have the potential to cause community disaster. I don't need to spend a lot of time telling you that gonorrhea, syphilis, HIV, herpes, and other sexually transmitted diseases are passed on from one person to another and the more people who become involved the greater the spread of the disease.

And it's just as obvious as to how we can spread emotional and spiritual sickness along as a result of sexual promiscuity. Let me just make a quick aside comment here as well. I think that from this passage, oral sex, mutual masturbation, and other things are sex. God takes sexual purity seriously. I hope all of us will as well.

Let's take time to read verse 31:

"You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in the uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place."

Those are God's words to Moses, to the Hebrews, and to us. Let me just take a moment to show you what is at stake. Last time we were together, we talked about what the Hebrews had to do when mould and mildew kept growing on the stones of a house. The house was declared polluted, torn down and completely pulverized and destroyed.

The Hebrew in Jesus' day was a lot like us modern church people. They had lost a sense of God's holiness.

¹*As Jesus was leaving the Temple that day, one of his disciples said, 'Teacher, look at these tremendous buildings! Look at the massive stones in the walls!'*

²*Jesus replied, 'These magnificent buildings will be so completely demolished that not one stone will be left on top of another'" (Mark 13:1-2 / NLT).*

Later at his trial:

⁵⁷*Finally, some men stood up to testify against him with this lie: ⁵⁸'We heard him say, 'I will destroy this Temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, made without human hands.' ⁵⁹But even then they didn't get their stories straight!" (Mark 14:57-59 / NLT).*

Jesus was saying that the temple, the religion, and the people had become so *tsaraat*, so tainted and polluted, that the only thing left to do was to destroy the temple, the religion, and punish His people. In the year 70 AD, the temple was destroyed, pulverized, and burned to the ground. Until this day, the temple has not been rebuilt and as an ultimate insult, the Muslim "Dome on the Rock" temple stands there. The children of Ishmael have built a temple of worship on the Rock of Isaac's Jerusalem.

From the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, when the Jews were scattered throughout the world, Israel has never again existed as a nation until 1948. God takes holiness seriously.

Let me give you an idea of how tempting it would be for a Hebrew to fudge on these laws. Let's take a young couple, trying to make an honest living. They open up a neighborhood store. They are very careful to close at sundown every Friday evening and stay closed until Saturday evening at sundown in order to observe the Sabbath. They go to temple and sacrifice regularly. They give more than 10 % of their money. And they help many poor people.

However, one night about midnight, they get to talking, get in a romantic mood, and have sex. It was a beautiful thing between a man and his wife. The next morning however, turns out to be one of the busiest days of the year for shopping. And so they get up early, shower eat breakfast, and open the store. They do a tremendous business. Sounds great, doesn't it?

The problem is that everyone they did business with that day: everyone they touched, shook hands with, gave change to, or even brushed against, became unclean. And further, everyone the customers shook hands with or touched became unclean as well. The sad thing is that no one would realize they were unclean, perhaps except the couple that had sex.

Let's carry the story one step further. Let's say that several of these people who had unknowingly become unclean brought a sacrifice to the temple. The sacrifice was unclean, the priest when he touched it became unclean, and the altar on which the sacrifice was offered up on became unclean. God's worship area became unclean. God may judge the entire camp and wipe everybody out because they have polluted His tent.

Let's go back to the beginning. We will see that when the couple had sex, they became ceremonially unclean until the next evening at sundown. Their personal integrity should have closed the store for the day. It would be a chance for them not only to show their love for one another, but their love for God and their love for the community. To be sure, it would cost

them a good day's sales, but at least their community would be preserved, and God could feel their love, their loyalty, and their commitment to living holy.

I don't want to make a long list, but we all know what God expects of us, don't we? If we are married, then we are commanded to be physically and sexually faithful, emotionally faithful, and spiritually faithful to our spouses in every way. We are to be loving, humble, serving, forgiving, and kind. If you are single, you are commanded to be sexually faithful in every way. That means no intimate touching or fondling genitals, no oral sex or anything like that. Our minds and bodies are to be pure. That is the test God gives us to see if we really love Him or not.

We all know that God calls us to be kind, gentle, forgiving, loving, joyful, etc. When one of us breaks faith with God, then we threaten the existence of the whole community. God destroyed the temple and scattered His people in the year 70 AD. There is no reason to believe that He won't do it to us today. Let's just make it a little more personal. When any of us sin and hide it, we threaten the existence of Devon Church. My sin and your sin threaten the very existence of this church. I'm hoping that there is no physical or spiritual mould or mildew growing on the walls of Devon Church. Each one of us has the potential to bring great blessing or great harm to Devon Church. **OUR PERSONAL SEX LIVES CAN EITHER BRING LIFE OR DEATH TO THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.**

Keep in mind we are talking about sex because this is what this passage is focused on. But that goes for all of our behavior. Gossip can kill a church. Cliques can kill a church. Prejudice can kill a church. Pride can kill a church. Those are just a few.

II. ABNORMAL CONTAMINATION (VS 3-15 & 25-30)

Sexually Transmitted Diseases Have The Potential To Destroy A Community.

This next section deals with abnormal contamination in verses 3-15 and 25-30. This is just as true today as it was for the Hebrews living in tents in the wilderness. **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DESTROY A COMMUNITY.**

A. SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES (3 & 25)

Verses 3 and 25 describe sexually transmitted disease. Verse 3 describes abnormal discharges that come from a male. Most scholars identify this description as gonorrhoea. With gonorrhoea, slimy discharge of pus, mucus, often greenish in color drip from the penis. It is often very painful for men to urinate. Today, it can be cured by penicillin, but in those days, the disease had to run its course. Often times the disease would leave behind scar tissue inside the penis that would sometimes block the flow of urine.

Although verse 25 doesn't specifically describe a sexually transmitted disease, it could. This does not refer to a normal menstrual period. Again, these are vaginal discharges of blood or other fluids like pus or slimy discharges. Again, these diseases would have to run their course.

In both cases, the males and females were unclean because of their discharges. Let me just point this out one more time. You didn't need to go ask a priest or anyone else. If you saw abnormal discharge dripping from your penis or vagina, you knew you were unclean and it was up to the individual to take the necessary steps.

B. SPREADING THE CONTAMINATION (4-12 & 26-27)

It would be necessary for each infected individual to take the proper steps because verses 4-12 and 26-27 describe the spreading of the contamination. I think that it is important to state that this is describing the spread of ceremonial uncleanness. In other words, if I had one of these diseases and I touched you, you would become ceremonially unclean, but that didn't indicate that you did anything morally or ethically wrong. You just came in contact with someone who was unclean.

We see in these sections that anything an infected person touched, sat on, or came into contact in any way, even if the unclean person spit and accidentally sprayed a passerby, that person or article became unclean.

You see there is nothing that indicates moral lapse on the person touched by the unclean person. The person simply washes his or her body, their clothes and remains unclean for the rest of the day until sundown.

Let me just make a quick aside statement here. If the infected person had sex with another person, that person would not only incur the ceremonial uncleanness until sundown, that person would also be infected with the disease and would be unclean until the disease ran its full course. You know there is not much integrity in our society. Sexually transmitted diseases are at an all time high. People are only interested in pursuing their own pleasure. We live in sad times. Sexual promiscuity is only one symptom. Unethical behaviors like cheating in business, school, and even sports, show how depraved we are as a people.

C. CLEANING UP THE CONTAMINATION (13-15 & 28-30)

Verses 13-15 and 28-30 lay out the procedures for cleaning up the contamination. When the discharges finally stop leaking from the penis or vagina, the person must start counting off 7 days. On day 8, the man or woman has to wash their clothes and based on the earlier verses, they must take a bath. Then they must take two birds to the Tabernacle area. No birds fly away free here. Both birds are sacrificed. The first bird is offered as a sin offering. The second bird is offered as a burnt offering.

Again, the sin offering is for whatever sins were committed, the burnt offering was a declaration that all of their bodies, including their penis and vagina, belonged to God. How we conduct our whole lives demonstrate how much we love God and are dedicated to being holy. Sexually transmitted diseases have the potential to destroy a lot of lives, especially in a self-absorbed culture like ours. Let's think of our behavior more locally. Let's think about our circles of influence: our schoolmates, our co-workers, our friends, and Devon Church. **SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DESTROY A COMMUNITY.**

Keep in mind; I want us to think of sexually transmitted diseases in more than technical medical diseases. I think our attitudes and behaviors towards sex spread spiritual, emotional and psychological diseases as well.

III. NORMAL CONTAMINATION (VS 16-18 & 19-24)

God Defines What Is Acceptable Sexual Behavior, Not Culture And Certainly Not Individuals.

This is the section I'm not sure I understand the "why" of these commands. Verses 16-18 and 19-24 describe normal contamination. At the very least we could say this. **GOD DEFINES WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, NOT CULTURE AND CERTAINLY NOT INDIVIDUALS.**

A. INVOLUNTARY DISCHARGES (16-17 & 19-23)

Verses 16-17 and 19-23 talk about involuntary discharges. The first description is of a man having a wet dream. In other words, while the man is sleeping, he has an involuntary ejaculation. Anything the semen touches needs to be washed: his body, his clothes, and his blankets. There is no sacrifice offered so there is no moral guilt here. There is nothing for the man to feel guilty about. It is a natural occurrence. He only remains ceremonially unclean until the evening.

The next description is of a woman having her period. Like the male who ejaculated, the woman who bleeds must wash her clothes, her bed, and anything she came in contact with. When her period was over, she merely washed and remained unclean until the evening. There is nothing evil or immoral with having a period. It is a normal part of life. Let me put this in perspective.

First of all, having a period and declaring the female unclean during this period often protected women from sexually overly aggressive husbands. Husband would have to leave them alone during their periods.

Secondly, if you think about it, women in that culture didn't have a lot of periods. They married young, probably shortly after they started having periods. Since women stop menstruating when they are pregnant and breast-feeding, and since they had a lot of children, they probably didn't have many periods during their childbearing years. Further, because of diet, they hit menopause earlier than today's woman. So having periods may not have been as inconvenient as we would think.

B. VOLUNTARY DISCHARGES (18 & 24)

Finally, verses 18 and 24 describe voluntary discharges. In this morning's text, all the discharges we have discussed so far, these are the only two voluntary contacts.

Verse 24 talks about a man having sex with a woman on her period. The interesting thing here is that when the man has sex with the menstruating female, he becomes unclean for 7 days. I can kind of understand that. Even if the woman was on the last day of her period, and they had sex on the last day of her period, the male remained unclean for 7 days more.

If you remember, I said that this chapter was structured as a chiasm. Verse 18 is exactly in the middle, as it should be. It describes natural sexual intercourse between a man and a woman. Here is what I don't understand. A husband and wife have consensual sex, which we are commanded to do both in the Old and New Testaments, and yet the act renders us ceremonially unclean. The issue again is the when the male ejaculates semen, the semen touches both he and the woman. That renders them unclean. They are to bathe and then they become clean at sundown.

The only thing that I can think of is this. Sexual fluids remind us of both life and death. We know that the semen carries sperm that once fertilizes an egg creates life. The menstrual blood is the body expelling unused eggs. So when semen spills out, it reminds us that millions of sperm will not reach an egg. When blood comes out, there are eggs that will not be fertilized by a sperm. However, when the sperm meets the egg, life is created. The sex act in this case procreates life.

The abnormal discharges caused by gonorrhea and other sexually transmitted diseases remind us that as sinful human beings we have the potential to pass on spiritual, emotional, and physical diseases and death on to one another.

Theologically, we must also remember that when we procreate even in the God-ordained way, we pass on both life and death to our children. Sex is yet another way in which we can demonstrate our faith in God and our dedication to Him and to living holy lives. **GOD DEFINES**

WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, NOT CULTURE AND CERTAINLY NOT INDIVIDUALS.

IV. EPILOGUE

It really isn't up to society, schools, friends, or anyone else to educate us about sex. As we have seen here, and as we will see more in depth as we study through Leviticus, God has laid out a clear and concise sex education course. God created sex and it becomes yet another way in which we can test our loyalty to and love for God.

To be sure, we can use our behaviors and attitudes towards sex as a test of our love for God, but sex is just one area of our lives. Let me give us a quick test of our dedication to holy living. Can you name three particular sins that you are actively fighting against? Could you say that you are at war with these sins? And do you take time to think about how these sins hurt Jesus? Do you think that the sins you are committing even if no one here knows about them can be destroying our church? That's a good test to know if you are truly pursuing holiness according to the book of Leviticus.

Look we have to quit going to our friends, coworkers, Hollywood, and society to tell us what is right and wrong. Don't even listen to me or your parents. Listen to God's Word the Bible and test who is telling you the truth and who is not. A.W. Tozer gave this great illustration in his book The Pursuit of God:

"If you have one hundred concert pianos, and you tune the second piano to the first, and the third piano to the second, and the fourth piano to the third, until you have tuned all one hundred pianos accordingly, you will still have discord and disharmony. But if you tuned each piano to the same tuning fork, you would have unity and harmony. So, too, in the body of Christ. When we each tune ourselves and our lives to Christ's, we will have unity."

Being the church doesn't mean coming here to church each week and pretending to be nice, good, and holy. Being the church means having the integrity to pursue holiness with energy and enthusiasm, knowing that what you do affects me and what I do affects you. Our unity is not smiling and getting along. Our unity is based on our dedication to pursuing holiness knowing that my bad behavior even in private could be killing the rest of us.

The Hebrews knew this truth well. God was everywhere in the camp. Not only was He in the Tabernacle and the worship area, not only did He walk all around the camp; He was in every tent and in every bedroom. We may think we are pretty good because nobody knows what evil thoughts we think or what evil things we do in private, but God sees, He hears, and He knows.