

What Is Your Resolution?

Have you determined to be a better employee, husband, wife, mother, father, son, or daughter? Do you want to stop drinking, smoking, or cursing? Are you resolved to get off your rear and clean out the attic, landscape the lawn, or fix the car? Have you made any New Year's resolutions?

Let us help you. Make one resolution this year. "Fear God and keep His commandments" (Ecc. 12:13). If you make this resolution, all other things will fall in line. You will be a better employee, husband, wife, mother, father, son, or daughter (Eph. 5:22-6:9). You will stop drinking, smoking, or cursing (1 Pet. 4:3-4; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 4:29; 5:4). You will not be lazy, but get busy doing the work that needs to be done in the house, yard, or on the car (Prov. 6:6-11). Remember, however, these are by-products of serving God. The real issue is honoring Him Who loves you, blesses you, and sent His Son to die for you (Jn. 3:16).

- Steven F. Deaton

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Church of Christ
3221 E. Hebron Lane
Shepherdsville, KY
40165-8959

Assemblies

Sunday Morning	9:00 a.m.
Sunday Evening	6:00 p.m.
Wednesday	7:30 p.m.

Elders

Tom Brown	502-921-2778
Laymon Byers	502-957-3627
John Smith	502-231-5341

Evangelists

Ron Halbrook	502-955-1748 halbrook@insightbb.com
Steven F. Deaton	502-428-6323 sfdeaton@earthlink.net

Phone: 502-957-5115

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Would You Let Your Daughter Do This?

Would you let your daughter suggestively dance in front of a group of men at a club? Would you let her do it wearing only a tight top and panties? You do if your daughter is a cheerleader. You say they wear more than panties? Okay, panties with a large ruffle that often flies up.

It is odd that some parents, especially fathers, will allow their daughters to gyrate their scantily clad bodies in front of hundreds or thousands of men and women on Friday night, but not allow them to do the same in a small club on Saturday night. They would not permit it when their daughter and her boyfriend are at home alone.

Look at the case of Herod and his step daughter (Mk. 6:14-29). She danced for him and several other men. Her actions stirred lusts in them which ended in John's death. When your daughter dances around in front of men, she stirs their lusts. She will thus attract undesirable men and be counted a cousin to one of history's wicked women.

God's word teaches that His people are to be modest. The Spirit specifically addressed the duty of women to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation" (1 Tim. 2:9-10). Propriety means "a sense of shame, modesty...reverence" (Thayer). Moderation is "soundness of mind...self-control, sobriety" (Thayer). Cheerleaders do not behave this manner. Rather, they often dress and perform like drunken harlots.

Parents have a responsibility to instill the principles of God's Word in their children. Fathers especially are enjoined to "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Allowing their daughters to be cheerleaders violates this command.

- Steven F. Deaton

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Divorce For The Cause of Pornography?

Divorce is rampant in our society. It is hard to think of a family that is not affected by it in one way or another. Not surprisingly, many arguments are offered to justify them.

Some rationalizations that are given include “God wants me to be happy—and my spouse doesn’t make me happy. Therefore, I can get a divorce,” “I’m just not in love anymore,” and “We grew apart.” One who believes in the Bible can easily see these are fatally flawed excuses.

Jesus taught divorce is lawful only in the case where one spouse commits sexual immorality. “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (Matt. 19:9). The innocent mate has the right to put away the guilty and marry another. Though this teaching is simple, men have complicated it by their actions and attitudes.

Because of the proliferation of pornography (the fastest growing addiction in the U.S.), the argument that it is a just cause for divorce and remarriage is made more and more often. The reasoning goes something like this:

1. Jesus said looking on a woman to lust after her is to commit adultery with her in your heart (Matt. 5:28).
2. Pornography inherently involves lusting after a woman.
3. The viewer of pornography has committed adultery in his heart.
4. The wife has the right to put him away.

There is only one problem with this—Jesus did not authorize divorce and remarriage based on sexual passion, but sexual action! He and the Holy Spirit made a distinction between the desires of the heart and the fulfillment of those desires. Jesus addressed the passions of man in Matthew 5:28 and the actions of man in Matthew 5:32. The Holy Spirit makes the distinction in Galatians 5:19 where He mentions “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness.” Uncleanness and lewdness are things that lead up to, but fall short of, adultery and fornication. They include things such as dancing, petting, immodesty, and pornography.

The argument has been made that some men view pornography and gratify themselves in place of and exclusion to sexual relations with their wives and this gives a wife the right to divorce and remarry. Again, there is one problem—the Lord did not authorize divorce and remarriage based on the lack of sexual relations, but for extra-marital relations (Matt. 19:9).

If divorce and remarriage is authorized because a man lusts after women in pornographic pictures and movies, then is it permissible when a man watches an R-rated movie with sexually graphic material in it? May a woman put away her husband for working extra long in the yard while the neighbor’s teenage daughter is outside in her bikini? What about catching him watching a Brittany Spears video? If committing adultery in the heart is cause for divorce, then most women and not a few men have cause. Besides, who determines the lust, the wife or the husband?

Is pornography a sin? Yes. Is it wrong for a man to look on another woman and lust after in his heart? Yes. Does this justify a wife getting a divorce? No.

- Steven F. Deaton

Belief & Obedience

The Hebrew writer addressed the rebellion of Israel in chapter three. He wrote, “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:18-19).

What kept all but two men out of the promised land? Unbelief. Disobedience. Which was it? Both. Disobedience is a manifestation of unbelief.

Today, those who do not obey the gospel by being baptized as the Lord and His apostles commanded, are like Israel in the desert—they are unbelievers (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38). As Jesus said, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16).

- Steven F. Deaton