

## Manual Edits to Print – October 2018

### ¶630.2.2 *Self Discipline*

*One attribute of the Spirit's indwelling presence is self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). As Christians we believe that life is full, abundant, and free in Jesus Christ (John 8:36; 10:10). We take seriously the words of Jesus to love God, our neighbours and ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). We also heed the Apostle Paul, when he writes, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body" (I Corinthians 6:19-20).*

*Therefore, we commit ourselves to be free from anything that challenges Jesus' lordship over our lives, that distracts us from joyful participation in His mission in the world and that damages, destroys, or distorts His life within us.*

*What God has created is good and was created for His pleasure (Revelation 4:11). He created humans with a capacity for enjoying His good creation. But as a consequence of the fall, sinful self-centeredness and intemperance (even with respect to various forms of godly pleasure) became part of the human reality.*

*Undisciplined seeking after pleasure is a form of idolatry that weakens the will, distracts from participation in the mission of God and models selfishness to others under our influence (Philippians 3:19; Colossians 3:5). Instead, we seek to experience the fullness of life in Christ, which includes enjoying what God has made in ways that honour God and are compatible with His mission in the world. We seek to enjoy a godly, balanced relationship with pleasure that allows us to be free to enjoy them in moderation or to abstain from them out of authentic conviction rooted in past experiences or out of love for a "weaker brother" (Romans 14:13-23).*

*We accept that, though all things may be allowed, not all things are beneficial (1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23-24). Spirit-led self-examination surrounded by loving mutual accountability is essential to growing in holiness. Therefore, we regularly ask ourselves honestly: Do I exercise godly self-control with respect to pleasure? How does what I invest in various forms of pleasure compare to what I give of my life resources to reach people with the gospel and to alleviate suffering? Does this form of pleasure restore or fatigue me, arouse a craving for more that I then must struggle to master? Is it inherently evil because it exploits or causes unnecessary suffering? Some pleasures (e.g. that which we ingest, the forms of recreation/relaxation that we pursue, etc.) if used with self-control, restore us. Some of the same pleasures can ultimately destroy us if used selfishly. On the one hand we can become obsessively distracted, even addicted to them. On the other hand, because some legitimate pleasures tempt us to excess, we can react by becoming overly scrupulous and, out of fear, seek to limit the liberty of others by imposing our control-based convictions on them. With respect to this, the Apostle Paul wrote: "Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence" (Colossians 2:20-23).*

*Pleasures which exploit others or which damage our health are inherently evil.*

As Christians we desire to be characterized by balance and moderation. We seek to avoid extreme patterns of conduct. We also seek to keep ourselves free from addictions or compulsions. Since it is our goal to live disciplined lives, in order to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, we depend upon the Holy Spirit to enable us to make choices that displace selfish indulgence in worldly pleasures. It is our

wish to live simply, in service to others, and to practice stewardship of health, time, and other God-given resources. We are committed to help every Christian attain such a disciplined life. Although unhealthy habits are not easily broken, believers need not live in such bondage. We find help through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, prayer, the counsel and support of other Christians and, if need be the help of professional services.

The following is an illustrative list of some difficult issues, habits and substances which may hinder, confuse, or distract us in seeking a disciplined, holy, Spirit-filled life.

- We believe that the intemperate consumption of food is a form of abusing the body which may result in illness and obesity. A healthy balanced diet preserves the strength of our bodies and extends our years of usefulness as servants of Christ.
- We believe that overwork causes unhealthy strain on individuals and relationships.
- We believe that the inordinate pursuit of leisure is an expression of selfishness and immaturity

We believe that the illicit and inappropriate use of illegal, prescription or over the counter drugs causes untold damage to people and relationships. Such drug use can restrict personal development, damage the body, and reinforce an unrealistic view of life.

- We believe that medical cannabis can be useful, as are other prescription medications, provided it is used under medical guidance and with discerning Christian counsel.
- We believe that the recreational use of cannabis, while legal, is problematic. Scientists, doctors and the police have raised many concerns about its use, such as its impact on the brain development of young adults, its addictive nature, and the risks it poses to workplace health and safety. We see abstinence as a wise form of self-discipline, recognizing that what we ingest or use is to be done to God's glory" (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17).
- We believe that alcohol is unpredictably addictive and the destructive effects from its abuse cannot be fully measured. We see abstinence as a wise form of self-discipline. Drunkenness is to be avoided at all costs in obedience to God's Word. (Proverbs 20:1; Luke 21:34; Romans 13:13 and Ephesians 5:17-18)
- We believe that tobacco is a major cause of a variety of cancers and other diseases, as well as being an expensive and socially offensive addiction. Nicotine is a powerfully addictive substance, whatever the delivery method used.

We desire to be a community of people continuing to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, living free from the excesses of pleasure and overcoming the bondages of addictions so that we can joyfully participate in the mission of God in the world. We believe in Christ's power to deliver (Romans 6:13; Galatians 6:2). But, we also recognize the struggles associated with attaining these freedoms and are therefore committed, with the grace that God supplies, to provide support to one another within and through the church body, through making pastoral counsel available and through referring people to professional and community resources.

## ¶630.2.7 Sexual Intimacy

*The biblical vision for healthy sexual intimacy is that it is a gift from God reserved for marriage between one man and one woman. Sexual intimacy creates a unique life-long bond that Scripture describes as “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 6:16). When expressed within the commitment of the marriage covenant, sexual intimacy is a great blessing and source of fulfillment. The marriage covenant is designed to protect this one man and one woman bond against that which is destructive and harmful to the couple, their children, the extended family, and society as a whole when one acts contrary to God’s design for sexual intimacy.*

- The biblical word for “fornication” or “sexual immorality” includes pre-marital sexual intimacy and lists it along with other forms of immorality as sin (Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:3-5). Bonding sexually to a person to whom one has not covenanted in marriage robs the bond of an eventual marriage of its exclusivity. Similarly, sexual intimacy outside of a marital union occurring after divorce or the loss of a spouse is also fornication and undermines the biblical design for healthy sexual intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:8-9).
- Extra-marital sexual intimacy, which Scripture calls “adultery”, transgresses God’s moral law and betrays the marriage covenant. Adultery damages the one flesh union in that it contaminates the exclusive bond of marriage and undermines trust (Exodus 20:14, Mark 7:20-23).
- In keeping with our reading of the scriptures (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:21-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11), we do not believe that the above biblical vision is fulfilled by same-sex sexual intimacy. We maintain a distinction between same-sex sexual activity and same-sex sexual attraction. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the church has often rejected, condemned, and mistreated LGBTQ people. As followers of Jesus, this grieves us, and we strive to live out our convictions about sexuality in ways that are gracious and Christ-like.

In all of the above instances, all persons are accountable to God for their thoughts, words and deeds (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Because Christians are part of fallen humanity we must deal with many inclinations to sin. We trust the grace of God is available and completely adequate to forgive and transform (1 John 1:9; Hebrews 7:25, 9:14).

The church has a corporate responsibility to be God’s agent of transformation to persons as they learn to live a Christian life that pursues the best of God’s design for healthy sexuality. This transformation can best occur as the church provides a loving and supportive environment. Because the sexual desire is so powerful, counseling is recommended as a part of the church’s pastoral care.

In summary, we recognize that this biblical vision contrasts with that of the prevailing culture, and we present it graciously as an alternative to the culture’s view of sex and sexuality.