

Avoid and Abstain

by Ed Wrather

The sermon emphasizes the importance of avoiding and abstaining from evil, even if it's just the appearance of evil, and provides practical applications for staying on the right path.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:14, Proverbs 13:20, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 10:13, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Galatians 5:16, Ephesians 5:11, 1 Thessalonians 5:22, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Moral Purity", "Wise Living"

Description

Ed Wrather emphasizes the importance of abstaining from every form of evil, using real-life examples like a deputy sheriff getting into trouble while soliciting a prostitute and the high number of injuries in bar fights involving alcohol or drugs. He highlights the practical wisdom in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, urging listeners to avoid situations that may lead to trouble and to abstain from anything that even appears to be evil. Wrather stresses the need to make wise choices, such as avoiding pornography by using filters and changing circles of friends to steer clear of illegal substances, even if it means giving up comfortable friendships.

Transcript

Abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:17 NASB) (Another translation says: "Avoid every kind of evil.")

In Milwaukee there was a deputy sheriff who was off duty and at 3:00 a.m. in the morning solicited a prostitute. He probably was not expecting what happened next. What happened was that he was robbed by several people and thrown into the trunk of his car. An anonymous caller did contact police telling them where the deputy could be found. Sheriff David A Clarke said, "I am disgusted that this officer would betray his family, the public trust, our organization and himself." The deputy was charged with solicitation and obstruction of justice. He was also suspended from his job as a deputy.

In one year in the United States according to Department of Justice statistics (1997) 155,160 men were injured (requiring treatment in a hospital emergency room) in what is commonly called "bar fights" involving alcohol or drugs. Just 49,923 women were injured in "bar fights" involving alcohol or drugs during that same year.

There are a multitude of other examples that could be found and used but these two illustrate the very practical wisdom contained in 1 Thessalonians 5:17. If the deputy had not been out cruising the streets

looking for a prostitute at three in the morning he would not have ended up finding so much trouble. If all of those men and women involved in bar fights had not been in those places to begin with and had not been drinking or doing drugs they probably would not have ended up in a hospital emergency room.

The old KJV translates 1 Thessalonians 5:17 as, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." There are some things that we may consider as borderline as to whether it is evil or not evil, good or bad. However, we should avoid those things that have the appearance of being bad even if it is what we would consider a gray area. When in doubt don't do it. Don't be a part of it if you are not sure.

There are, however, many things that we know very well that we should not participate in, be a part of, partake of, etc. Pornography is one of those things. How would God have us to handle that temptation? Avoid it and abstain from it. If you are tempted, use a filter (Like that available from bsafeonline.com.) and allow someone you trust to have control of the password.

We, also know, that we should not use/abuse illegal substances. However, it will be very hard to avoid using if we are constantly surrounded by people who are using those substances. You may have to change your circle of friends to avoid the temptation and the peer pressure to do those drugs.

The same thing may be necessary for many other situations where peer pressure is involved. It is never easy to give up friendships that we have grown comfortable with and enjoy. But if those friendships have the potential of destroying everything good about our lives - we must make a choice. Will we do what we know God wants us to do or will we continue recklessly down a path we know is filled with danger?

When it comes to evil or even the appearance of evil it is best to avoid it or to abstain from it. And, when in doubt do the same, avoid and abstain.

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