

What does the Bible say about temperance and abstinence? Also, does temperance and abstinence go far beyond food and sex? I'm writing a 5+ page article on temperance and abstinence as a student for my university, and I'm researching for insight.

The bible says that Christians are to live a simple life. The apostle Paul wrote: Aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing (1 Th 4:11–12). To wives the apostle Peter wrote: Let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God (1 Pe 3:4). Our culture has different ideas about what constitutes beauty but God does not see as man sees. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart (1 Sa 16:7).

Regarding the quiet life that Paul discussed, John MacArthur wrote:

This refers to one who does not present social problems...or generate conflict among...people in his life, but whose soul rests easy even in the midst of difficulty (cf. 1 Pet. 3:4).¹

Regarding the gentle and quiet spirit that Peter discussed, MacArthur continues:

Here is beauty that never decays, as the outward body does. “Gentle” is actually “meek² or humble” and “quiet” describes the character of her action and reaction to her husband and life in general. Such is precious not only to her husband, but also to God.³

Men and women are to remain virgins before marriage (1 Tim. 5:22) and monogamous after marriage (Matt. 19:3–9; 1 Cor. 7:1–16, 1 Ti 3:2). Marriage is an example of Christ and the church (Eph. 5:25–33). It is to suffice (1 Cor. 7:1–7). The bible warns of the dangers of unchastity (Prov. 6:24–35). Believers are to shun the unchaste (1 Cor. 5:11).

Betrayal and abandonment in marriage does not free one from the covenant while his or her spouse lives (Matt. 19:6). Marriage is dissolved by death (Rom. 7:2, 3). God hates divorce (Mal 2:16) and never approved of it (Mt 5:31–32). Regarding Jesus' commandment for sexual purity in Matthew 19:11–12⁴ John Piper writes:

¹ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed., p. 1847). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

² Meekness is not weakness. It is bridled power. The spirit-filled life will manifest this (Lk 24:49, 1 Co 12:13, Jn 4:10, 7:37–39).

³ MacArthur, J., Jr. (Ed.). (1997). *The MacArthur Study Bible* (electronic ed., p. 1944). Nashville, TN: Word Pub.

⁴ “All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it.” The New King James Version. (1982). (Mt 19:11–12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Jesus is not saying that some of his disciples have the ability to obey his command not to remarry and some don't. He is saying that the mark of a disciple is that they receive a gift of continence while non-disciples don't....⁵

Gluttony (an excessive appetite) is: sternly forbidden (Prov. 23:1–3), a characteristic of the wicked (Phil. 3:19), leads to poverty (Prov. 23:21).⁶

Temperance is needed in: eating (Prov. 23:1–3), sexual appetites (1 Cor. 7:1–9) and in all things (1 Cor. 9:25–27). Men must exercise self control (Prov. 16:32). They are helped by God's Spirit (Gal. 5:23) to grow spiritually (2 Pet. 1:6).⁷

⁵ Piper, John (1986). *Divorce & Remarriage: A Position Paper*

⁶ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's quick reference topical Bible index* (p. 257). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

⁷ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's quick reference topical Bible index* (p. 608). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.